



## 'What The Dickens - 5 Ways To Balance The Books & Start Living!'

***“Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure nineteen [pounds] nineteen [shillings] and six pence, result happiness. Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure twenty pounds ought and six, result misery”.***

And so goes Mr Micawber’s famous, and oft-quoted recipe for happiness.

Micawber though was a character created by **Charles Dickens**, who as a child had himself been scarred by his own father’s incarceration in Marshalsea, London’s infamous debtors’ prison and in later life both his journalism and fiction were filled with cautionary tales of poor financial decisions — From Micawber’s *‘recipe for happiness’* in *David Copperfield*, to *Bleak House*’s description of the *“old pagan’s god”* (compound interest), money is as much a presence in his writing as the unforgettable characters, such as Pip or Oliver Twist.

### Real Happiness

Real happiness and a life well lived however, are of course, dependent on so much more than a simple financial sum that balances the books, so to speak — **But it is a start!**

And to achieve real happiness you first need to be grateful, [because gratitude precedes happiness](#) and makes it truly possible — So, it makes sense to tally up all those things to feel grateful about — Those *As-if moments* and those [little](#) and not so little things that help us to better understand the why and how things are, and provide nourishment for both the body and the soul, each and every day.

But then you must [STOP](#) — Make a reckoning — Do the Maths’ — See what the *Bill of Fare* for your life looks like on a daily-basis — & you may be more than a little surprised at just how rich and in-credit your account is.

### Fair Dealings

The 18th Century Irish Statesman, Political Theorist & Philosopher, **Edmund Burke** wrote, *“In all fair dealings, the thing bought must bear some proportion to the price paid”.*

What steps then should you take to ensure an equitable proportion in your life?

Here are **5** that I think are *vaut le detour* and certainly worth the effort as well:

**1. Be Prepared:** The French politician and the founder of mutualist philosophy, **Pierre-Joseph Proudhon** wrote about the *“The*

*fecundity of the unexpected*” — So, firstly be prepared to embrace the unexpected and the new: The British economist, **John Maynard Keynes** wrote that, *“The difficulty lies not in the new, but in escaping the old”* — Set yourself free from the tyranny of thinking, *“This is how it will be, game up!”* — That fixed mindset and language of defeat — And whilst the Roman Politician and Lawyer, **Cicero** gave wise counsel with his dictum, *‘Menum de Tabula’* i.e. know when to lay by the pencil, don’t put off until tomorrow what you can do today, because as Mr Micawber also said, *“Procrastination is the thief of time, collar him!”*



2. **Be Present:** Throw off those mental chains that bind you in order that you can just live in the present and be *mindful* and aware: The English historian and lawyer, **Frederic William Maitland** wrote *“We should always be aware that what now lies in the past, once lay in the future”*. Introduce some objective distance into your life, but conduct yourself moment-by-moment — In addition, as the **Rev Thomas Page** advised in his book ‘The Art of Painting’ written in 1720, *“Let everything have its proper motion according to its’ nature”* because as Portia tells us in **William Shakespeare’s** ‘The Merchant of Venice’, *“How many things by season seasoned are to their right praise and true perfection”* (Act 5, Sc 1): **So, take control of all areas of your life** starting now & don’t fear the future — which is *“predictably unpredictable”* according to Dan Airley author of amongst other books, ‘Predictably Irrational’ — And don’t bemoan the past either — Simply be Present and be prepared for change, remembering the Italian writer **Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa’s** wise words, *“Everything must change in order to stay the same”*.

3. **Be Curious:** Curiosity most certainly didn’t kill the cat and neither will it kill you — Quite the reverse in fact! The 18th Century English Novelist, Journalist & Spy, **Daniel Defoe**, would talk of feeling a *“Curiosity of a very extraordinary nature”* — Whilst **Albert Einstein** said, *“The important thing is not to stop questioning”* — He also said that, *“Creativity is intelligence having fun”* — Ask yourself each day, *“How curious am I?”* and remind yourself you need and should be very curious! It’s so easy to go through life with a practiced indifference — Or a studied cynicism — Detached, at one step removed — & only ever allowing yourself to become mildly interested now and again — So you drift — **You have no purpose or passion:** Did you know that every day we take around 22,000 breathes? Do you ever think about that — Wonder about it — Be amazed by it? **Do you ever count those breaths** in for 6 and out for 7 — Becoming fully aware of the air as it enters through your nostrils or your mouth and fills your lungs, slightly inflating your stomach as it moves through your body — And do you notice the blood coursing through your veins in response to this natural action? Don’t be a casual observer in your own life, giving away your power, your agency and your authoritative voice.



4. **Be Courageous:** Life is hard — Stuff happens — Deal with it: Living requires courage and to be the hero of your life story requires that you be equally courageous — To go into the unknown and encounter the unexpected situation — To deal with the new — To rise up once again and meet the next challenge — To be prepared to think differently — To be different — Even take risks: In this process something has to be given up so you can be renewed and rise again, and what I suggest you should give up is your adversity to risk — Your reticence to fail, or fall short: And to be truly courageous is not to be fiercely independent, rather it is to be fiercely interdependent — Acknowledging your vulnerability — Focusing on meaning and purpose, rather than status and achievement — &, being prepared to *fail forward*; & finally

5. **Live Your Values:** The stuff that you identify as being truly important and meaningful — However realise and accept you can never fully achieve your values, although in the pursuit of *your truth* you can maintain a consistent course towards them — So try to regard them moreso as a compass to guide the path that you want to follow and become the person you want to be.

The dying words of the **Emperor Augustus** of Rome were said to be, *"I found Rome built of clay, I leave it in marble"* — We all share a common fate and a finite time, but these 5 Steps might help you to foot the *Bill of Fare* for your life — turn clay into marble i.e. A life lived ordinarily into a life lived extraordinarily — & become a Winner!

**I am all about making the complex less complex**, the tough stuff not so tough and putting the unreachable within reach of everyone. I am author of *'Uncovering Mindfulness: In Search Of A Life More Meaningful'* (All new freshly minted 2nd Edition coming soon in 2019) available on Amazon and [www.bookboon.com](http://www.bookboon.com); the *'Coffee & A Cup of Mindfulness'* and the *'Mindful Hacks For Mindful Living & Mindful Working'* series. I am also a Contributing Author to [The Huffington Post](https://www.huffpost.com) and a Contributing Writer to [Thrive Global](https://www.thriveglobal.com). You can follow the continuing journey Uncovering Mindfulness on Twitter [@TheMindfulBook](https://twitter.com/TheMindfulBook) and at [@Paul\\_Mudd](https://twitter.com/Paul_Mudd)

