

What Really Makes Us 'Rich'

Every New Year, many of us resolve to achieve certain goals during the next twelve months. For many, a major focus may be to lose weight, find a better job, and/or make more money. If any of a number of resolutions could be achieved, one would be happy. Unfortunately, in our materialistic society, it seems that **happiness is often equated with being able to buy things** such as a slimmer body, a bigger house, or more blue-chip stocks.

One's pursuit of material things is not all bad, however ~ it's just that many times, it **narrows our perspective and priorities in life**. The goal is to get as much wealth as possible and then one would be 'happy and rich.' When one's sights are set on becoming economically rich, tunnel vision sets in and nothing will deter one's course.

Nothing, except experiencing a special loved one's illness and/or death. For those who have the courage to grieve, an illness or death can really open one's eyes to how shallow materialistic richness really is. One's main priority of 'making it' in this world can be shattered in an instant. It's really **ironic that it often takes the pain of a tragedy for one to open up and appreciate life's true richness**. Sure, we'd all like to be set financially, but is that what being 'rich' is really all about?

Finding one's richness is a personal journey, but one that can ultimately enhance one's life and relationships. It can also help one work through the grief process and beyond ~ **giving meaning to your life**.

In my conversations with bereaved parents, the following statements reflect some of their feelings and thoughts of what being 'rich' really entails.

Being 'Rich' Means ~

- Feeling the warmth and tenderness of my newborn baby snuggled tightly in my arms
- Sharing in my child's joy when he took his first steps
- Walking hand-in-hand with my daughter on the first day of school and hearing her say, "I love you"
- Being able to share my 8-year-old's tears when the family pet died
- Having my teenage son come to me and ask for help
- Having friends that will listen, support me, and really care about me
- Watching my daughter marry the man she loves
- Being a part of my grandchildren's lives
- Cherishing memories
- Being able to once again see the beauty in a sunny or rainy day
- Having the privilege to be a part of my child's life
- Putting life's ups and downs in perspective

- Living
- Finding peace within myself that one day I can survive tragic losses and live with joy again and move beyond survival

And the list is endless.

Take a moment and reflect on what being 'rich' means to you. Why wait for a tragedy to trigger your reprioritizing. Do it today. Cherish the moment and those who have touched your life.

Deb Lee Gould, MEd
Director, FOD Family Support Group
February 1992