

FIRE Starter: Don't Wait Until F.I. to Answer the Question "How should I spend my time?"

You can find all of Zach's previous posts [here](#). Today Zach is going to challenge you to start exploring how you want to spend your time. In the post below, Zach is going to ask you to participate in a thought experiment where you contemplate what life would be like if money were no object. I would say this is an exercise in lifestyle design. I've found this to be a very useful exercise personally, one that I regularly go through. It's also been very useful in gaining more clarity and autonomy over my own time faster than it would have ever happened had I left it to chance, or by waiting to hit Financial Independence (see related links at the end of Zach's post).

I hope you enjoy Zach's latest FIRE Starter post below.

First, a Quick Reminder of Why I Started This Series

*For the astute observer, you will notice that I have added three new series to the blog: [LateFIRE](#), [FIRE Starter](#), and [Chasing FIRE](#). Notice a theme? They all capitalize on the explosion - one might say the COMBUSTION - in the FIRE (financial independence retire early) movement. But let's set the record straight: on the GYFG blog, "FIRE" is defined in a slightly different way, meaning, as I see it, Financial Independence / Recreational Employment. That's because I am after **freedom**, rather than a typical retirement, and see myself working forever. But once I hit [my number](#), my employment will represent my recreational choice.*

At 32, I find myself on the older end of the millenials' age range, which in 2018 is 22-37, [according to the Pew Research Center](#). Guys like Zach have got me thinking that there is a younger part of my generation that may not be able to relate to where I am in life personally. Thus the decision to bring on Zach as a regular GYFG contributor, to reach those younger millenials. He will be writing about earning, investing, and saving money in your 20s. At 24, with a net worth in excess of \$130,000 and an income approaching six figures, he is more than qualified. Believe me when I say there is always someone younger and better than you out there, and Zach is putting my own 24-year-old self to shame. I share that only to say that I

wish I had been reading people like Zach when I was in my early 20s.

Imagine what it would be like if you had an unlimited amount of money.

I think most people would quit their day jobs. Some might write their boss a nasty letter and hand it to her or him in person. Others might send an email out to their department, letting everyone know they won't be back. Others might take the noble path and provide a traditional two-week notice.

A small percentage of people would keep their jobs. This represents the select few who enjoy their work and would do it with or without a paycheck.

After quitting their day job, I think most people would take a vacation with their family. They might take that road trip to Sequoia National Park they had been planning for years.

They might fly to Australia and visit the Sydney Opera House.

Perhaps they'd go on an African safari tour.

Once they satisfied their wanderlust, most people would come back home.

Some would use their newfound unlimited money supply to move to a new location. Maybe some warmer place, like Southern California. Perhaps somewhere more exotic, like Bora Bora.

Others would stay put in their hometown, but they might upgrade their house. They might buy a new car. Or some new gadgets. Maybe a bigger television.

Once they finish upgrading their lifestyle, buying all the cool gadgets they want, and traveling to all the places on their bucket list, I think most people would be left with the thought "Now what?"

Now What?

That question of "Now what" is deeply fascinating to me.

Buying new stuff and taking trips might be fun for six months or even a year. It

might be exhilarating for a while. Yet, at some point, once the excitement wears off, you would still have to face everyday life and answer the world's hardest question:

“What should I spend my time doing?”

Most of us have never had to face this question head on.

So much of our time is consumed by working and commuting that we naturally use our free time to relax.

If we're not working, we're probably relaxing. If we're not relaxing, we're probably working.

We don't have to worry about how to use our time in a productive optimal way. Most of us don't have enough free time to ponder this question.

Yet, anyone who hopes to achieve financial independence one day will have to answer this question.

Of course you won't have an unlimited amount of money, but you'll hopefully reach a point where money no longer influences how you live on a daily basis.

If you have enough savings that you don't need a day job to pay the bills, you'll naturally be in a situation without a job where you have to decide how to spend all your free time.

I think this is the point where you would truly get to know yourself. Once money stops influencing your decisions, curiosity becomes your north star.

Your natural curiosity and interests would lead you.

You could start a nonprofit organization without worrying about the income.

You could start writing more because it doesn't matter if you earn any money from it.

You could become a park ranger without wondering if the salary will cover the bills.

You could join that yoga club because you have the free time.

Curiosity vs. Salary

Curiosity is a wonderful thing. It tends to lead us in the right direction. In contrast, the need for money distorts the direction we take in life. We often pursue jobs because of the salaries, not because they align with our interests.

We have to be realistic, though. We need money to live. Some people's natural interests simply don't align with a high income. If your one true love is creative writing, you're in a tough spot. It's not a well-compensated field.

On the other hand, if you came out of the womb solving complex coding problems and enjoying every minute of it, you're in luck. The world values your work tremendously and rewards you with a high income.

Many of us, I think, find a happy median. Most of us are in fields we find at least somewhat interesting, but undoubtedly an expected salary range influenced our decision.

At the end of the day, although that difficult question of "How should I spend my time?" is one that most people never have to answer, the answer to that question often tells us exactly what we should be doing in life.

Ask That Question Now

If you're on the road to financial independence, I encourage you to start pondering this question long before you have enough savings in the bank to quit your day job.

Personally, I have been pushing myself to follow my curiosity more.

I started a blog because I didn't want to wait until I was rich to start sharing my thoughts on money.

I recently joined a weekly yoga class because I had always been interested in yoga but had never given it a try.

I also started playing basketball more often because it makes me happy and it's a sport I've always enjoyed.

You don't have to wait to start following your curiosity, either.

Do that thing you enjoy outside of your day job.

Write more poetry if that's what you like.

Draw more art.

Build more stuff.

Take online classes that peak your interest.

Stop procrastinating and [start that blog](#).

Join that meditation class.

Join that fitness group.

Do more things that you used to enjoy as a kid, before money became so influential in your daily life.

The journey to financial independence can be years, and often decades, long for most people. By following your curiosity and exploring different areas while you're still on the path to F.I. you may find that you actually stumble upon a certain activity or type of work that you enjoy *and* that you can earn money from. In that case, you may not even need to keep striving for financial independence because you will have found your "right vocation:" work you actually enjoy doing.

There is virtually unlimited upside to exploring different interests and hobbies on your way to financial independence and very little downside.

So, don't wait until you're financially independent to answer the question "How should I spend my time?"

RELATED: [What If Money Were No Object? \[Part One\]](#)

RELATED: [What If Money Were No Object? \[Part Two\]](#)



Gen Y Finance Guy

Hey, I'm Dom - the man behind the cartoon. You'll notice that I sign off as "Gen Y Finance Guy" on all my posts, due to the fact that I write this blog anonymously (at least for now). I like to think of myself as the *Chief Freedom Officer* here of my little corner of the internet. In the real world, I'm a 30-something former C-Suite executive turned entrepreneur turned capital allocator. I am trying to humanize finance by sharing my own journey to Financial Freedom. I believe in total *honesty* and *transparency*. That is why before I ever started blogging, I decided that I would share all of my own [financial stats](#). I do this not to brag, but instead to inspire motivate, and also to hold myself accountable. My goal is to be a beacon of hope, motivation, and inspiration for *you*, the reader, by living life by example and sharing it **all** here on the blog. My sincere hope is that you will be able to learn from me - both from my successes and my failures! [Read More](#)