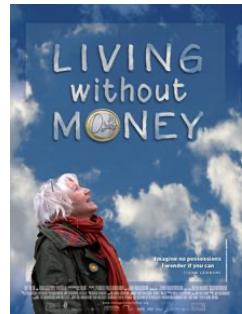


Living with and without money

My Life without money

Heidemarie Schwermer, a 63-year-old German woman, has lived without money for the last ten years, and has written a book about her experiences called *Living without Money*.



At the age of 54 Heidemarie gave up her job as a psychotherapist, gave away all her money and her flat and threw away her credit cards. Today, apart from a few clothes (three sweaters, two skirts, two pairs of shoes, and a coat) and a few personal belongings, she doesn't own anything.

It all began as a one-year experiment. In her home city of Dortmund she set up a 'swapping circle' where people swap services without using money, for example, a haircut for a mathematics class. To prove that this could work she decided to give up using money for a year. But when the year ended she continued and has not used money since then.

At first she house-sat for friends who were on holiday. She stayed in their house in return for watering the plants and looking after their animals. At the moment she is staying in a student residence where she can sleep, have a shower, or use a computer in return for cooking for the young people who live there. She also 'works' as a psychotherapist. 'Before I treated very wealthy people but now I help anyone who turns up. Sometimes they give me something in return, but not always.'

Heidemarie says, 'I can live thanks to my contacts. A lot of people who know me understand what I'm doing and want to help me. When I need a bus ticket, for example, or a new tube of toothpaste I think, "Who can I ask? What can I give them in return?" If I want to go to the cinema, I might offer to look after somebody's children for the afternoon.'

It is one of the mistakes of our society that most people do something they don't like just to earn money and spend it on things they don't need. Many people judge you according to how much you earn. In my opinion, all jobs are equally important. You may not earn a lot of money but you may be worth a lot as a person. That's my message!

So what did she do with all the money she earned from the sales of *My life without money*?

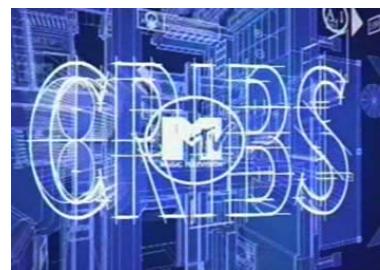
'I gave it all away...'

1. Read the article, then fold the paper along the dotted line and answer the questions (in keywords) without looking at the text.
 1. What was Heidemarie's job? psychotherapist
 2. What possessions does she have now? a few clothes and a few personal belongings
 3. How did the experiment start? she startet with a one year experiment with a swapping circle
 4. Where has she lived since the experiment started? students residence, house sat
 5. Does she still work? yes, but doesn't get paid
 6. What does she do when she needs something? she asks and asks what she can give in return
 7. What is she trying to show with her experiment? money is not everything
 2. What do you think of Heidemarie and her experiment?
 3. Heidemarie says that all jobs are equally important. Do you agree? How important is your job in relation to others?

Living with a lot of money – Akon on MTV Cribs

Watch the episode (shot in 2009) and take notes.

1. What is particularly expensive or exclusive about Akon's home? Make a list.



- toys: expensive cars
- white tiger
- 2 pools inside and 2 outside
- gas station
- helicopter
- everything is white
- personal chef
- custom made bed, made with silk and leather
- smart home



and a lot more



2. Final discussion:

- a) What are possibly negative aspects of Akon's and possibly positive aspects of Heidemarie's lifestyles?
- b) How would you want to live?