

AI-01720 Pillars of Human Living

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Minus generational wealth, is earning a living or a paycheck the ultimate aim of a human being to thrive and enjoy a long life. Delve and deep dive . List the pillars of human living.

I was cycling in the city of Cebu Philippines on my long distance Saturday ride when I passed by a homeless child naked and holding and squatting the rails of the metal fence in the side street. From afar, I could not make up what he was actually doing but when I passed by him slowly, it was obvious, he was doing a number 2. It dawned on me where the parents were and I continued pedaling, a makeshift home from cardboard boxes, the parents were taking a nap in the side street. Then I wondered what could have mattered to their life? The answer was a paycheck. If only they have stable jobs, they would have money to take care of themselves and the child.

It's an interesting and profound question to consider the ultimate aim of human beings, especially when "generational wealth" is removed from the equation. While earning a living or a paycheck is undeniably a fundamental necessity in modern society, it's far from the ultimate aim for thriving and enjoying a long life. Let's delve deeper into this.

Earning a Living: A Means, Not an End

In most contemporary societies, a paycheck is the primary means to acquire basic necessities like food, shelter, and clothing. It also enables access to healthcare, education, and opportunities for leisure and personal development. Without a stable income, survival itself becomes precarious, and the stress associated with financial insecurity can significantly impact health and longevity. So, yes, earning a living is a critical enabler of thriving and a long life.

However, reducing the ultimate aim of human existence to merely "earning a living" is an overly simplistic and ultimately unfulfilling perspective. If that were the case, anyone with a high income would automatically be thriving and living a long,

enjoyable life, which is clearly not always true. We see countless examples of individuals with substantial financial resources who struggle with mental health, relationships, purpose, and overall well-being.

Beyond the Paycheck: The True Pillars of Human Thriving

True thriving and a long, enjoyable life encompass much more than financial security. They are built upon a multifaceted foundation, which we can call the "pillars of human living." These pillars are interconnected and contribute holistically to well-being:

- **Physical Health:** This is foundational. Without good physical health, the ability to work, enjoy life, and engage with the world is severely limited. This pillar includes proper nutrition, regular exercise, adequate sleep, access to quality healthcare, and preventative care. A paycheck helps enable access to some of these, but it doesn't guarantee healthy choices or a robust constitution.
- **Mental and Emotional Well-being:** A healthy mind is as crucial as a healthy body. This pillar encompasses emotional regulation, resilience, stress management, self-awareness, and a positive outlook. It involves finding meaning, purpose, and joy in daily life. Mental health struggles, regardless of income, can profoundly diminish quality of life and longevity.
- **Meaningful Relationships and Community:** Humans are social creatures. Strong, supportive relationships with family, friends, and community are vital for emotional well-being, a sense of belonging, and even physical health (studies show social isolation negatively impacts longevity). These relationships provide support during challenging times and amplify joy during good times. Generational wealth doesn't buy genuine connection.
- **Purpose and Meaning:** Having a sense of purpose – whether it's through work, hobbies, volunteering, raising a family, or creative pursuits – provides direction, motivation, and a reason to get up in the morning. It's about feeling that one's life has significance and contributes to something larger than oneself. This is distinct from simply earning a paycheck; many people find their purpose outside of their paid employment.
- **Personal Growth and Learning:** The human desire to learn, grow, and develop new skills is fundamental. This pillar involves continuous learning, intellectual stimulation, self-improvement, and adapting to new challenges. It keeps life

interesting and prevents stagnation, contributing to a sense of vitality and fulfillment.

- **Autonomy and Freedom:** The ability to make choices about one's life, pursue one's interests, and have control over one's time and circumstances is deeply satisfying. While a paycheck can provide some financial freedom, true autonomy also involves psychological freedom from external pressures and the ability to live authentically.
- **Contribution and Altruism:** Giving back to others, contributing to society, or helping those in need often brings a profound sense of satisfaction and purpose. It connects individuals to something larger than themselves and fosters a sense of shared humanity. This isn't dependent on wealth; even small acts of kindness contribute to this pillar.
- **Enjoyment and Leisure:** Life isn't just about work and survival. The ability to relax, pursue hobbies, experience beauty, and engage in activities purely for enjoyment is crucial for rejuvenation, stress reduction, and overall happiness. This pillar highlights the importance of work-life balance and intentional pursuit of joy.

The Interplay and The Role of "Work"

While a paycheck enables many of these pillars by providing resources, it's critical to understand that the work itself can also contribute directly to some of these pillars. For many, work provides:

- A sense of purpose and meaning.
- Opportunities for personal growth and learning.
- Social connection and relationships.
- A platform for contribution.

However, if work is purely a means to an end, devoid of meaning, exploitative, or excessively stressful, it can actively detract from these pillars, even if it provides a comfortable living.

Conclusion

Minus generational wealth, earning a living or a paycheck is an absolutely essential prerequisite for most people to access the resources needed to thrive and enjoy a long life. However, it is not the ultimate aim. The ultimate aim is the cultivation and balance of the comprehensive pillars of human living:

physical health, mental and emotional well-being, meaningful relationships, purpose, personal growth, autonomy, contribution, and enjoyment. A paycheck is a powerful tool to build and maintain these pillars, but it is ultimately a means to an end, not the end itself. True human thriving emerges from a rich tapestry of experiences, connections, and internal states that go far beyond the balance in a bank account.

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