

Life is about Choices and Choices Have Consequences

Description:

This activity is designed as a broad overview of the issues included in a lifetime of financial decision-making. It can be used at the beginning of a unit – to introduce students to vocabulary and themes, or it can be used at the end of a course to help students see how each topic they’ve covered fits together over a lifetime. It is important that students come to realize that their life will come with many critical decisions (what type of career, how much education, when to buy a house, etc.) and that these choices will come with consequences.

Time required: 1 class period, 45-50 minutes

Objective: Introduce students to a series of life’s choices and how the consequences of these choices impact life.

Participation: Entire class discussion, potential for small or large group work

Learning outcomes / Discussion topics:

Opportunity Cost	Career Choices and Income	Risk and Insurance
Philanthropy	Budgets	Credit
Loans	Payday lenders	Identity Theft
Banking Services	Rent to Own	Foreclosure
Fraud		

Background for the Teacher:

Research has shown that in most cases, it is physiologically impossible for students at this age to fully comprehend what life will “throw” at them (their brains are not fully formed), nor will they really care at this point in their young lives. Yet, the purpose of a personal finance course is to introduce these life skills and get students to consider consequences. It is also important that students see and hear “real life” stories without having to give away their personal information. Teachers should never ask a student to publically share information about themselves or their family. A student may choose to share this; but should never be forced to – this is PERSONAL – and these types of activities could alienate a student from further participation in the course.

In order for students to experience a “real life” story without sharing personal information, this lesson offers numerous life scenarios which can be distributed to members of the class.

These scenarios allow students to experience life and see a future that is not their own; but could be. It is critical that every student understand that names have been changed; but these are all real life stories.

Once the scenarios have been introduced and discussed, the framework of the entire course will have more relevance and meaning to the students.

Materials:

1. Copy of a life scenario for each student. Depending on the class enrollment, some number of students will receive the same scenario. You may want to plan for a group activity where you combine together people with the same scenario; or you create larger groups with one of each scenario.
2. Scenario Analysis worksheet for each student

Implementation of Lesson:

1. Explain to the students that in a few minutes their “identity” will change. They will be given a new life with a new name. They might even switch gender in this activity. The goal of this activity is for them to experience a new life and live it quickly. Their new life begins at age 18 and ends at retirement age or perhaps sooner – not everyone lives as long as they want.

Ask the question: At what age do people retire from work (stop working)?

The typical retirement age is around 62-65; but some people are able to retire early while others must work well into their 70s.

Say to students: So, you are about to be given a new life. Your life will include choices. These choices may lead to good things later in life or bad things. Some of your choices in your young age will affect you for the rest of your life. As you read your life scenario, circle key events or decisions and make note of vocabulary words that you might not understand. These are topics that will be covered (or have already been covered) during this course. For example, your life might include investing in a mutual fund or foreclosure, or compound interest (what are these things?).

2. Distribute a life scenario to scenarios to every student so that each has at least one life. You may want to allow students to exchange lives to avoid potential conflict (a boy who doesn't want to experience a girl scenario). Give students time to read and reflect on their new life. Ask them to record information/insights on their Scenario Analysis worksheet.

3. Begin classroom discussion with:

Who likes their new life? (*Many students will raise their hands as they have been given a life of success and some with fortune and wealth.*)

Who doesn't like their new life? *(Other students may raise their hand as their life has included poor decisions which resulted in things like bankruptcy, jail and early death.)*

Question those students who "liked" or "disliked" their life – why? What was good? What was bad?

4. Begin a discussion of certain life events and at what ages they occur. The scenarios all begin at age 18 and end at retirement or death. What life events happened in student scenarios at age 18? 25? 35? 45? 55? 65?

5. Finish with a discussion of how these topics will all be covered within this personal finance course:

Introduce a road map to future lessons and how this course will begin to introduce each of these topics with a little more depth. Allow students to consider what they want their life to be like over the next 40-60 years. The concepts taught in this course will allow them to reach their goals so they better pay attention. This could be the most important class they ever take.

Choices Have Consequences: SCENARIO ANALYSIS

1. Your Name:
2. Your Scenario Name:
3. Occupation(s):
4. Best job/ Salary (At what age did this occur?):

5. What good (positive) choices have they made?

6. What bad choices have they made? What were the consequences?

7. What unforeseen events occurred, if any?

List examples of...

8. Budgeting/Philanthropy

9. Credit use/abuse

10. Investments /Banking

11. Personal risk/Insurance:

12. Did they make financial decisions alone or did they have help?

13. How would you change this life? What would you do differently?

LIFE Scenario #1: **John Carlo**

Good day, John Carlo. This is the story of your life. Remember back in grade school when you were asked, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Let's see if you stayed with that dream or if your life took a different path.

Grade school dream job: Professional Baseball player

At age 18 -

John Carlo, you are about to graduate from high school. You have given up on your dream of becoming a professional baseball player since you weren't good enough to even make the high school team. At age 14, you started to do painting work around the house and found you were really good at it. Sometimes it was kind of fun. Soon, your neighbors were offering to pay you to paint rooms in their houses. At age 16, you started your own business, JC's Painting Service. Now, as you are about to finish high school, your business is going great and you have almost \$20,000 in your bank account. Unfortunately, since you spend most of your time painting and not studying, your grades at school are lousy and your chances to get into most 4 year colleges is gone. You've got money in the bank and could spend your life as a painter; but you really think college might be a better choice. What will you do?

At age 25 –

John Carlo, you are now 25 and have just graduated from the University of Cincinnati with a business degree in Marketing. After high school graduation, you shut down your painting business and enrolled at the local community college. You had hoped to get into a University; but your grades were not good enough. After two years, you transfer into UC's business college. You used all of your savings to pay for your education and are now hoping to get a good job somewhere.

At age 35 –

John Carlo, you are now 35, married with 2 children (1 girl -8 , 1 boy -6). You have done well in your career as a marketing professional and are now a National Sales Manager. You live in a nice home with a 30 year mortgage started when you were 28. Your job gives you good benefits like paid vacation time and medical insurance. They offer a retirement savings option; but you'd rather use your extra money to take the kids to Disney every year. Life is good; but you wish you could save more money. It seems like you spend everything you make and have little to show for it. You've just purchased a new SUV to have lots of room for the kids as they get older.

At age 45 –

John Carlo, you are now 45, still married and your kids are 18 and 16. Your daughter is graduating from high school and applying for colleges. Your son is 16 and really wants his own car. Your sales manager job still pays well; but your 10year old SUV gets terrible gas mileage and keeps needing more maintenance. Same as your son, you really want a new car. You started a college savings plan for your kids when you were 38; but there is not enough money in the account to pay for much more than your daughter's first year. Your house is worth more than when you bought it; but you'll be paying for it for another 13 years. Life is stressful.

At age 55 –

John Carlo, you are now 55. Your kids are out of the house; but you get to remember them every month when the bill comes due for the 2nd mortgage you took out on your house to help them pay for college. It was a good decision as they are becoming successful in their careers; but you still have no money for your own retirement. Thankfully, your company is still doing well and you are now a Vice President. Every extra dollar you make is being invested so you can hope to retire in 10 or less years. Your first mortgage will be paid off in 3 years. Your 2nd will take longer.

At age 65

John Carlo, you are now 65. The last 10 years have been tough. You worked very hard and put in many extra hours. You took very few vacations as you were trying to invest as much as possible to make up for all the years that you didn't invest when you were young. If you retire now, you don't have enough money saved for you and your wife to afford to stay in your current home (even though it is paid for there are ongoing maintenance and utility bills). Do you keep working or retire now, sell your house and find someplace cheaper to live?

Are you pleased with how your life turned out?

Would you go back and change anything?

LIFE Scenario #2: **Ana**

Good day, Ana. This is the story of your life. Remember back in grade school when you were asked, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” Let’s see if you stayed with that dream or if your life took a different path.

Grade school dream job: Doctor

At age 18-

Ana, you are about to graduate high school with a very strong GPA 3.8/4.0. You’ve always focused on college and made the right decisions to have many college choices. You’ve been accepted into numerous universities and can choose numerous career paths. You still want to be a doctor; but are wondering whether you can afford all of the required education and it’ll take like 8 years of more school. Maybe you should just be a nurse instead?

At age 25 –

Ana, you have graduated from college. You decided to become a physical therapist which required you to stay in school and get a master’s degree in addition to your undergraduate degree. You’ve been hired to work at a clinic in Dallas, Texas and you’ll be making almost \$65,000 to start. Unfortunately, you’ve got over \$100,000 in school loans to pay for; but your career has just started. With your new job, you’re eligible for a new home loan right away and you are getting credit card offers from everywhere. There is virtually nothing you cannot buy. You are young and making good money, you have no trouble finding men who want date you.

At age 35 –

Ana, you are still making good money as a physical therapist (now over \$75,000/year); but you are struggling financially. At 26, you bought a BMW convertible, and at 27, you bought a 3 bedroom house with nice back yard. You installed a new swimming pool and used your credit cards to fill the house full of furniture. You hosted a party where one of your “friends” fell off your diving board and cracked his head on the concrete by your pool. He sued you for negligence and this is when you found out that your insurance was never updated to include coverage for the pool. You got a huge bill for this mistake. Your “friend” agreed to drop his lawsuit against you for \$80,000 – cash. You didn’t have the money; so you had to borrow it from your employer since you had maxed out all your credit cards and had no equity in your house. No one will loan you money and you had no idea how much it really costs to keep a pool clean – you hardly ever swim in it anyway and you’ll never throw another party. You were about to get married; but your boyfriend decided he didn’t want to take on all your debts and broke up with you.

At age 45-

Ana, you are still paying off the credit card bills for things you bought in your late 20s. You now make over \$100,000 per year as a physical therapist; but are still struggling financially. You are single; but rarely have the time or energy to date anyone. You have three cats who keep you company. You hope to be able to travel with your girlfriends; but most of them are now married with kids. Going to see someone else’s kids play soccer is not all that much fun for you.

At age 55-

Ana, your life seems to have taken a positive turn. Since you've always had a strong income, you were able to finally get your credit cards paid off. You had a brief scare when you were diagnosed with breast cancer at age 46, but your medical insurance paid for the treatment and you've fully recovered. Once your financial situation cleared and you got all those old credit cards paid off (20 years later), you started to investigate philanthropy (ways to give back to the community). You raised money for cancer research and at a fundraiser met a very nice man who you eventually married at age 50. You enjoy travelling and hiking.

At age 65-

Ana, you are retired. Your husband had always been a good investor into a retirement benefits program at his work and you both will be able to live off of these investments and not work. You have some savings which you started in your mid fifties. The weather in Dallas is just too hot; so you want to retire somewhere else. Where should you move?

Are you pleased with how your life turned out?

Would you go back and change anything?

LIFE Scenario #3: **William**

Good day, William. This is the story of your life. Remember back in grade school when you were asked, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” Let’s see if you stayed with that dream or if your life took a different path.

Grade school dream job: Professional Basketball Player

At age 18-

William, you are on your way to achieving your childhood dream of being a professional basketball player. At age 14, you were featured in *Sports Illustrated*, as the “Future Basketball Star”. You put all your energy into basketball and train everyday. You’ve played for the best AAU teams and traveled the country playing basketball. You went to school because you had to; but you never studied and aren’t really sure how you ever passed a class. As you approach your senior year, you have been offered a contract to play professional basketball in a country you never heard of, Turkey. Should you stay in school and graduate or go to Turkey and start making money now?

At age 25-

William, you are in the middle of your 2nd NBA contract. You never graduated from high school. You took the offer to play pro basketball in Turkey and earned \$200,000 at age 18. Playing basketball as a job was your dream and you were living it - in Turkey. Having grown up in household that was poor, you knew what it was like to struggle without money; but you always had friends and family. In Turkey, you had lots of money; but few friends other than the guys on the team and most of them were from other countries. You couldn’t wait to get back to the United States and play in the NBA. After 2 years in Turkey, you became eligible for the NBA draft and were selected in the first round. This gave you a guaranteed contract. You signed a three year deal with the Chicago Bulls for \$4.8 million dollars. It was great to be back in the United States. You bought your mom a new house and another one for yourself. These homes cost \$8.6 million dollars; but you could afford them with monthly payments financed with a 30 year mortgage at 8.6 percent. After your first year in Chicago, you were traded to Utah for two players and a future draft pick. Your mom kept her house in Chicago; but you needed to sell yours. You put your Chicago home up for sale and bought a new house in Salt Lake City for another \$2.8 million. At 23, your career is going well and you sign a new free agent contract with Seattle for six years and \$36million. Your home in Chicago is still for sale and now you are moving to Seattle. You put your home in Utah up for sale.

At age 35-

William, you are back in Chicago. Your basketball career ended in your late 20s when you had a knee injury. Your house in Utah sold for \$500,000 less than you paid for it; but no one ever purchased your house in Chicago. When your career ended, you still owned 2 homes that required regular house payments, insurance and utilities. You could not afford any of this so you were forced to file for bankruptcy. Your homes were foreclosed by the bank and you are broke. Your mother got to keep her house because you had completely paid for it; but she sold it and moved back to the old neighborhood so you both could have money to live on. You’ve got an idea to start a restaurant business, William’s Basketball Café.

At age 45-

William, you're back in the old neighborhood where you grew up in Detroit. You are about 200lb. overweight and struggle to get up the steps of the building where you live. Your old knee injury hurts everyday and you don't have medical insurance to purchase any medications. You started William's Basketball Café with the money your mom got from selling her house; but you had no idea how to run a restaurant. Remember, you never even graduated from high school. Everyone was giving you advice; but you didn't know right from wrong or what to believe. You paid too much for kitchen equipment and bought things you didn't need. Your location was bad and few people ate there. You hated to see the food go bad, so you ate most of it yourself, gaining lots of weight. You ran out of money in Chicago and moved back to Detroit to live with your cousin, Carl. Carl offered you a job selling tires at his shop.

At age 55-

William, you are no longer alive. You took the job with your cousin selling tires; but at age 52, you had a massive heart attack while unloading a delivery truck. You were overweight and that put tremendous strain on your heart. You died working at a tire store in Detroit.

At age 65-

William, you've been dead for 13 years.

Are you pleased with how your life turned out?
Would you go back and change anything?

LIFE Scenario # 4: Caroline

Good day Caroline. This is the story of your life. Remember back in grade school when you were asked, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” Let’s see if you stayed with that dream or if your life took a different path.

Grade school dream job: Ballet dancer

At age 18 -

Caroline, you are not likely to be a ballet dancer as you never took a dance class. High school has been a lot of fun; but you’ve spent more time on your social life than school work – you were the most popular cheerleader at the high school. Unfortunately, you didn’t earn a college cheerleading scholarship and your grades were not good enough for an academic scholarship. Your parents couldn’t afford to pay for school so you got a job at a friend of the family’s Construction Company making \$8.50/hour.

At age 25 –

Caroline, you worked hard at your job and your boss was willing to let you scheduled work around classes at community college. You graduated with a 2 year degree in Business Management and were promoted to a full time position earning \$30,000 annually. This has allowed you to move into your own apartment and get a used car. A year after that you were promoted once again to a job at the main downtown office. Your salary increase barely covered the new cost of parking (\$80/month), but it was a more prestigious position. The longer drive each day really started to beat up your car and it started to break down. You were late to work twice in a month due to car problems and your boss urged you to “fix this problem”. You have several options to consider:

Option 1:

Buy a “newer” used car. Your budget will allow you to pay about \$200 a month; but you have \$0 saved for a down payment and you aren’t sure what your current car is worth as a trade in. There is also no guarantee the new used car is better than the one you have.

Option 2:

Get your car fixed. The estimate for the repairs is \$1500. The shop will let her pay for the repairs in installments, but they want \$500 up front. Your car would be out of commission for at least a week and the shop does not provide loaner cars. You’ll have to take the bus while your car is being repaired.

Option 3:

Sell your car “as is” and put the money in a savings account. Try to save more money while riding the bus and eventually build up to a nice down payment on a new car. It will take almost a year of riding the bus to save enough money for the down payment.

At age 35-

Caroline, you are unemployed and it all started with your car troubles. You chose option 2 and dropped your car off at the mechanics shop. You put the \$500 down payment on a credit card which you saved for “emergencies”. After getting the car back, it still doesn’t run well. At lunch one day, you joked with

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your co-worker, John that you'd be better off if someone would just steal your car so you could collect the insurance money and pay off your bills, maybe even get another car. John says he knows someone who will sink your car in the Ohio river for \$100 and after thinking it over, you decide to have his friend steal your car. You collected the insurance money; but six months later, John's friend got caught in your old car. He tells the whole story and at age 27, you were convicted to 3 years prison for insurance fraud. You can't find work because no one wants a business manager who went to jail for fraud. You went back to live at home and became a volunteer at your church. At 32, you ran into a guy you went to high school with. Robert used to be a real nerd; but was really good at math. He was working as an engineer and you began to date. At 33, you got married. Now, at 35 you are unemployed; but married and expecting your first child, a girl you plan to name Madison.

At age 45-

Caroline, after the birth of your second child, Robert Jr., at age 38, your husband, Robert Sr. and Madison were killed in a tragic car accident. Your husband had good benefits from his engineering company including a life insurance plan. In addition to that policy, he had purchased an insurance policy for Madison and a 2nd policy on himself. You received approximately \$750,000 after his death. This money paid off your debts and all the funeral expenses leaving you money to live on and take care of Robert Jr. This money won't last forever unless you find work or invest it wisely. What is your plan?

At age 55,

Caroline, you decided to invest the insurance money. You consulted with many financial professionals and studied their training and certifications before you chose to work with them. They diversified your investments and found ways for the \$500,000 you invested to earn 10% per year. This \$50,000 is your only income. Though 30 years you're your criminal history still prevents you from finding work. While Robert Jr. is in school, you volunteer and mentor students. You budget 10% of your money to go to the church.

At age 65,

Robert Jr. is a successful engineer and you are able to retire and live off of your investments. You hope that grandchildren are coming soon.

Are you pleased with how your life turned out?

Would you go back and change anything?

LIFE Scenario # 5: **Mike**

Good day, Mike. This is the story of your life. Remember back in grade school when you were asked, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” Let’s see if you stayed with that dream or if your life took a different path.

Grade school dream job: Astronaut

At age 18 -

Mike, you are about to graduate from high school. When your counselor told you that to become an astronaut you have to take as many math and science classes as possible, you lost interest in that career path. Too bad you decided not to take the more advanced math classes when you started high school. The good news is that your junior year social studies teacher really got you excited about working for the local government and she helped you get a summer internship at the county parks department. It sounded like fun, but all those screaming children got to you and you quit after the first month. You spend the rest of the summer working at your uncle Bill’s grocery store. Not much money, but also not very hard work. When you finally got around to talking to your counselor about college as you started your senior year, you realized how much college will cost and that you have not saved anything. You are a pretty good student, but can you get a scholarship with a 3.2 GPA? What will you do?

At age 25 –

Mike, you are now 25 and have just graduated from college with a degree in political science. It took you almost six years to graduate, but you just couldn’t shake that interest in local government. It sure wasn’t easy. You spent two years part-time at a community college and worked part-time to pay the bills. Luckily, you could live at home. If it had not been for your girlfriend, Marcy, you wouldn’t have studied enough to make it. She was a great student and kept you at the books. Are you ready to settle down? Marcy is considering a new job in Cleveland, about 150 miles away. Here you are, a new graduate without a job and not finding much in the job market that takes advantage of your skills and interests. Should you give uncle Bill a call? What about Marcy? What will you do?

At age 35 –

It really wasn’t hard to decide to follow Marcy to Cleveland. You found a job with the city government working for the planning department. Aren’t you glad you took those extra math and statistics classes? You and Marcy have been married for almost eight years and you are expecting your second child in four months. You first, three-year-old Lisa, looks just like Marcy. You and Marcy have a nice, but small house in the city. You have been saving as much as you can, but that trip to Mexico last year took a chunk of your savings. Marcy will not be able to work soon and money will be a little tight. Oh well, your job is still challenging and rewarding even though the pay is not as good as some of your friends who work for private companies. Is it time to make a career change? A new car would be nice. What will you do?

At age 45 –

Mike, you are now 45, and your children are 13 and 10 years old. You spend as much time as you can with them, but your new job with a real estate development company often demands long hours and frequent travel out of town. It took a while, but you finally found a larger home, with, of course, larger

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mortgage payments. Luckily, Marcy was able to go back to work part-time after both girls were both in school. Yesterday, Lisa came home from school and asked you if she will be able to go to college. It was "Career Day" at school and Lisa decided she wants to be a lawyer. You told her, "sure, you can do whatever you want." Is it too late to start a 529 college saving fund? As the girls get older, life is getting a lot more complicated and expensive. The furnace sounds like it is on its last legs and the roof doesn't look very good. Maybe they will make it for one more winter. Marcy wants to know why you can't take off a little more to spend some time at home. What will you do?

At age 55 –

Mike, you are now 55. Your kids are both in college, with one about to graduate. It wasn't easy, but the girls were very good students and you took advantage of every possible scholarship opportunity. They will have to repay some student loans, but not nearly as much as some of their friends. Maybe now, you can start paying off more on the balances on your credit cards. It was so easy to reach for the plastic, especially when the roof finally had to be replaced. Life is really pretty good, and retirement is not that far away. It is time to take a good look at the company retirement plan and the 401K. What will you do?

At age 65 -

Mike, you are now 65 years old and you have the option to retire with a pretty good nest egg. The girls are both married and on their own. Your three grand children are lots of fun. Marcy is not in very good health, but the insurance plan takes care of most of the healthcare expenses. Is it time for a little more leisure?

Are you pleased with how your life turned out?

Would you go back and change anything?

LIFE Scenario #6: Jay

Good day Jay. This is the story of your life. Remember back in grade school when you were asked, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” Let’s see if you stayed with that dream or if your life took a different path.

Grade school dream job – professional skateboarder

At age 18—

Jay, as you graduate high school, you’re sticking to your dream of being a pro skater. You’ve secured sponsorships with local skate shops, gotten free product from major companies, and have even had small parts in a couple skate videos. You did OK in school, but do not plan on going to college. You’re living the dream, right? You’ve discovered you’re really good at helping promote your local shop, friends’ bands, and other endeavors through designing flyers, using the internet, and networking. You live with 4 other guys in a small two bedroom apartment in Los Angeles.

At age 25—

Jay, you’ve progressed a bit farther along the skateboard industry’s career path. Sometimes, you even make decent money skating. If you win a competition, you get a few thousand dollars. After a number of spills and tumbles, however, you’ve faced a couple reconstructive knee surgeries and you haven’t won anything in three years. Skating isn’t that great for your body or your bank account. Without health insurance, you’re left with a lot of medical bills. The manager at the local Burger King makes more money than you and has health insurance. You cannot afford the prescription drugs from your doctor; so you start to purchase and use illegal drugs. At your girlfriend’s urging, you’ve gone back to school to get a degree in design. Using promotional art you did for various skateboard companies, you get into a good program at a local university. You pay for school with loans, freelance work, and a part time job in a skate shop. Money is extremely tight, but you work hard and do well in school. As you graduate, you secure a good internship with a marketing firm specializing in youth culture.

At age 35—

Jay, your internship paid off. You are a promotions manager at a good company. You’ve had to go back to school briefly a couple times to learn more about various aspects of the business, including web design and online marketing. However, the company has paid for some of this. You’re on your way to paying off your school loans, too, and have already taken care of your medical bills. Though you make decent money, your finances are still very tight due to your old debt. You and your wife drive used cars which break down often. Car maintenance becomes a nearly monthly expense. You rent an old house instead of owning a home. High energy bills are costing you a lot. You still skate occasionally, but your knees hurt all the time and your drug use increases.

At age 45—

Jay, in your late 30s, you quit skating; but started experimenting with harder drugs. You kept this private and lucky for you, your company doesn’t randomly drug test. You continue to do well at work and your financial condition begins to stabilize. You and your wife are experts at budgets and you begin

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to build some savings. However, as you approached your forties, your company was purchased by a larger corporation that had a strict drug policy. It is time to clean up or face getting fired. Confident you know enough about marketing to start your own firm and since you were finally debt-free, you decide to quit. You start with a few clients you've been doing work with and put in 12-14 hours a day to grow your business. You do some of your best work and gain a new level of success. Your business grows, but all the work puts a strain on your personal life. While you were "clean" for a while, you begin to relieve your stress with more drug use. Afraid of your growing drug use, your wife leaves you.

At age 55—

Jay, at age 50 your business had grown into a healthy marketing firm employing a number of talented individuals. That year, riding home from a concert, you are stopped at a random DUI check point. The officer smelled something on your breath and performed a search of your car where he found your stash of illegal drugs. You never could kick the habit. You were arrested on charges of felony drug possession. You spend all of your saved money on lawyers who keep you out of jail, get the charges reduced to a misdemeanor and get you into a drug rehabilitation program. Unfortunately, there is no saving your business. You lose all your clients and are out of work. It is time to start over. You finally learn that nothing good comes ever comes from drug use.

At age 65—

Jay, you emerged from the drug program feeling great. Since you avoided a felony conviction, you were able to find work at a small promotions company at age 56; but are paid less than what you made at age 40. You have no savings and are likely to have to work for the rest of your life. You volunteer your time counseling youth on the dangers of drug use. You've got a good story to share. You were a professional skateboard champion. You had a beautiful wife. You had a successful business. You lost it all; but you're still alive. Your knees still hurt; but it is a pain you learn to live with..

Are you pleased with how your life turned out?

Would you go back and change anything?

LIFE Scenario #7: **Kelly**

Good day, Kelly. This is the story of your life. Remember back in grade school when you were asked, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” Let’s see if you stayed with that dream or if your life took a different path.

Your grade school dream job: Veterinarian.

At age 18 -

Kelly, you are not off to a good start toward your dream. You are about to graduate from high school, maybe. When your parents divorced, you just about gave up on school. It was tough getting up every day when they were always fighting over money. Your dad couldn’t make all of the child support payments and your mom couldn’t find a job that paid enough for all of the things you wanted. Studying science, math and social studies just didn’t seem important to you. You worked many late shifts at McDonalds, but, at least, you had some money to spend. Mrs. Robinson, your school counselor, tried as hard as she could to keep you on the right path. There was nothing she could do when you were arrested. You were really tired and had to work late again. One of your “friends” offered to sell you some “speed pills” that they had a prescription. It was an undercover police operation and since you had just turned eighteen, you ended up in adult court. You didn’t have to go to jail; but the conviction will stay on your record for a while.

At age 25 –

Kelly, you are now 25 years old. You didn’t quite make it through high school, because you were two required credits short and you just couldn’t bring yourself to go back for another semester. You worked at a variety of low paying jobs because you didn’t have a diploma and that conviction was on your record. After a few years, a counselor at the unemployment office helped you enter a program to earn a GED. It was hard work, but worth the time. You found one pretty good job, but you lost it because you told the employer that you did not have any convictions. They sometimes check those things, you know. Things are not looking good.

At age 35 –

Kelly, you are now 35 years old. Things turned around positively when a friend told you about Ohio’s criminal record expungement law. After saving to pay for an attorney and luckily keeping out of trouble, you were able to have the “first time offender” conviction cleared from your record. It is a good thing you didn’t get caught when you drove after drinking a couple of times. Without the conviction on your record, you were able to find a better job as an assistant at a veterinary clinic. You never lost that dream to work with animals, but being a veterinarian is long gone. You took some business courses at the Community College, but didn’t stay with it. The hours are good and the pay is okay, but you still don’t have enough education to move up very far. You got pregnant when you were 28 years old and your daughter, Katie, is now seven years old. Katie’s dad pays child support, but he doesn’t make much. Roger, your live-in boyfriend for the last five years wants to get married. He loves Katie and Katie loves him.

At age 45 –

Kelly, you are now 45, and married to Roger. Katie is seventeen and starting her senior year in high school. She is a good student and will graduate on time. Roger is a great dad to Katie, but you seem to always have trouble making ends meet. He has a high school diploma, but doesn't have any education beyond that. You started a small college fund for Katie when she was in elementary school, but the investments you chose on your own did not grow like you'd hoped. Looking back, you wish you would not have purchased that big TV and laptop at the Rent to Own store. It seemed like a great way to get what you wanted (with payments you could afford); but you ended up paying way more than you ever thought was possible. It probably would have been less expensive using a credit card and now you've got no savings and little for your daughter's college. You are now the assistant office manager at the veterinary clinic and learning about bookkeeping and other office skills from Mrs. Johnson, your boss.

At age 55 –

Kelly, you are now 55. You are still at the veterinary clinic and Mrs. Johnson is going to retire next year. You have already told the clinic's owner that you would like to have her job after she leaves. The pay increase would be very helpful. You have been paying a little each month into a 401K account that your boss matches with 50 percent. It is hard to believe that in just ten years you will be considering retirement.

At age 65 -

Kelly, you are now 65 years old. You can retire, if you want, and start withdrawing from your 401K. Luckily, when you got the promotion, you put half of the pay raise into the 401K each month. You don't have a lot in the account because you waited so long to start saving. You will also get a small Social Security income each month. Roger is not ready to retire. He has a company retirement plan, but not enough years. Katie is married and has two children you visit often. The house you bought when you married Roger still has a mortgage, but you refinanced to borrow against your equity a couple of times and there is little equity left after housing values dropped.

Are you pleased with how your life turned out?
Would you go back and change anything?

LIFE Scenario #8: Mary

Good day, Mary. This is the story of your life. Remember back in grade school when you were asked, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” Let’s see if you stayed with that dream or if your life took a different path.

Grade school dream job – Actress

At age 18 -

Mary, you are about to graduate from high school. You still want to be an actress and have enjoyed performing on stage in many high school plays. You’ve wanted to go to acting school instead of college and are planning on moving out to Los Angeles. You have no idea how much money it costs to move or where you’ll live. Your parents can’t help you because they have struggled financially and didn’t really understand how to budget for savings or investing. You’ll need to really focus on the responsibility and figure out a way to make this happen all on your own.

At age 25 –

Mary, you are now 25 and a recent college graduate. You just accepted your first professional job as a Financial Consultant at a local CPA firm. At 18, you were accepted into Acting School, but soon after found out you were pregnant. You were forced to stay living with mom and dad; but you decided to go to college and work really hard as a single Mom to become a professional who knows how to save, invest and plan for your future. You didn’t want to head down the same path as your parents and saving for your daughter, Jane, and paying for her college is also very important to you. You hope to work hard, live a healthy lifestyle and retire at a young age so you can travel and see the world. You’re doing everything you can to stay focused, meet your goals and create opportunity for yourself. Obviously, with all the working and caring for Jane, you had little time to yourself so you considered online dating. After a few really bad dates you met a man, Brandon, who cares dearly for you and your daughter, he has a great job and is just as motivated as you are.

At age 35 –

Mary, you are now married to Brandon and your daughter is 16, she has a little brother Brian, who is 5 years old. Your wedding was a dream come true and with all the money you and Brandon saved, the honeymoon was just as fabulous as you could have hoped for. Once you started taking finance classes in college, you set money aside in mutual funds and over the past few years you’ve invested in company stock and are feeling pretty good about your financial standing. While you use credit cards, you’ve avoided buying everything you want and the car you drive is sensible rather than “an awesome ride”. You are beginning to feel that all the hard work is paying off and are pretty proud of yourself. Brandon’s career is really taking off as well; he’s worked his way up the ladder and is now Web Designer for a popular magazine.

At age 45 –

Mary, you are now 45, still married. Your kids are 26 and 15. You’re a partner at the CPA firm and Jane is graduating from college. She is very grateful that you were able to help assist her in paying for it.

Brian is 15 and wants his own car; but you want him to understand how work hard and save for the things like you did. You've decided to make him get a job. Brandon is very successful in his career and was just promoted to Art Director, but recently suffered from a heart attack and is recovering from surgery. Things are a little stressful as the medical bills are quite expensive but since you've saved your money and planned for set backs like this you are feeling okay about it and are just thankful that Brandon is going to be okay.

At age 55 –

Mary, you are now 55. Your daughter married a very nice young man and they are expecting their second child. Being a Grandmother is everything you expected and more. Your son is focused on his career and has moved to California, you only get to see him a few times a year but you know that he misses the family and is always thinking of you. Your husband, Brandon, died about a year ago of a stroke and you are feeling so blessed that your daughter has stayed so close. All of your hard work has paid off at your firm because they are offering you an early retirement package that will make you set for life, which helps you cope with the loss of your husband. You are not worrying about how you will get by.

At age 65

Mary, you are now 65. The last 10 years have been wonderful. You've been blessed with a great network of friends and have had the opportunity to travel to see all the places you've wanted to, even spending some quality time in California with your son and his family. When you are not traveling and visiting your loved ones, you've decided to start volunteering at a local Arts Academy. Working with aspiring actors and actresses brings a lot of joy to your life and it helps you feel young again, thinking back to the day you too dreamed of moving to L.A. and making it big. You are also able to provide financial guidance and advice to the students at the Art Academy as your past experience in financial planning has made you quite an expert. Helping your students' understand the importance of investing and saving and knowing that you are truly making a difference for their future is very rewarding for you.

Your husband had looked forward to traveling with you one day when you both retired and aspired to write a book about it. You've decided to make his dream come true by writing a story about your life, the lessons you've learned and the travels you made. You dedicated the book in loving memory of the man you loved and lost.

Are you pleased with how your life turned out?

Would you go back and change anything?

Framework of each scenario:

LIFE Scenario # ---

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Good day XXXXX. This is the story of your life. Remember back in grade school when you were asked, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Let's see if you stayed with that dream or if your life took a different path.

Grade school dream job –

At age 18

At age 25

At age 35

At age 45

At age 55

At age 65