

MIGHTY METAPHORS

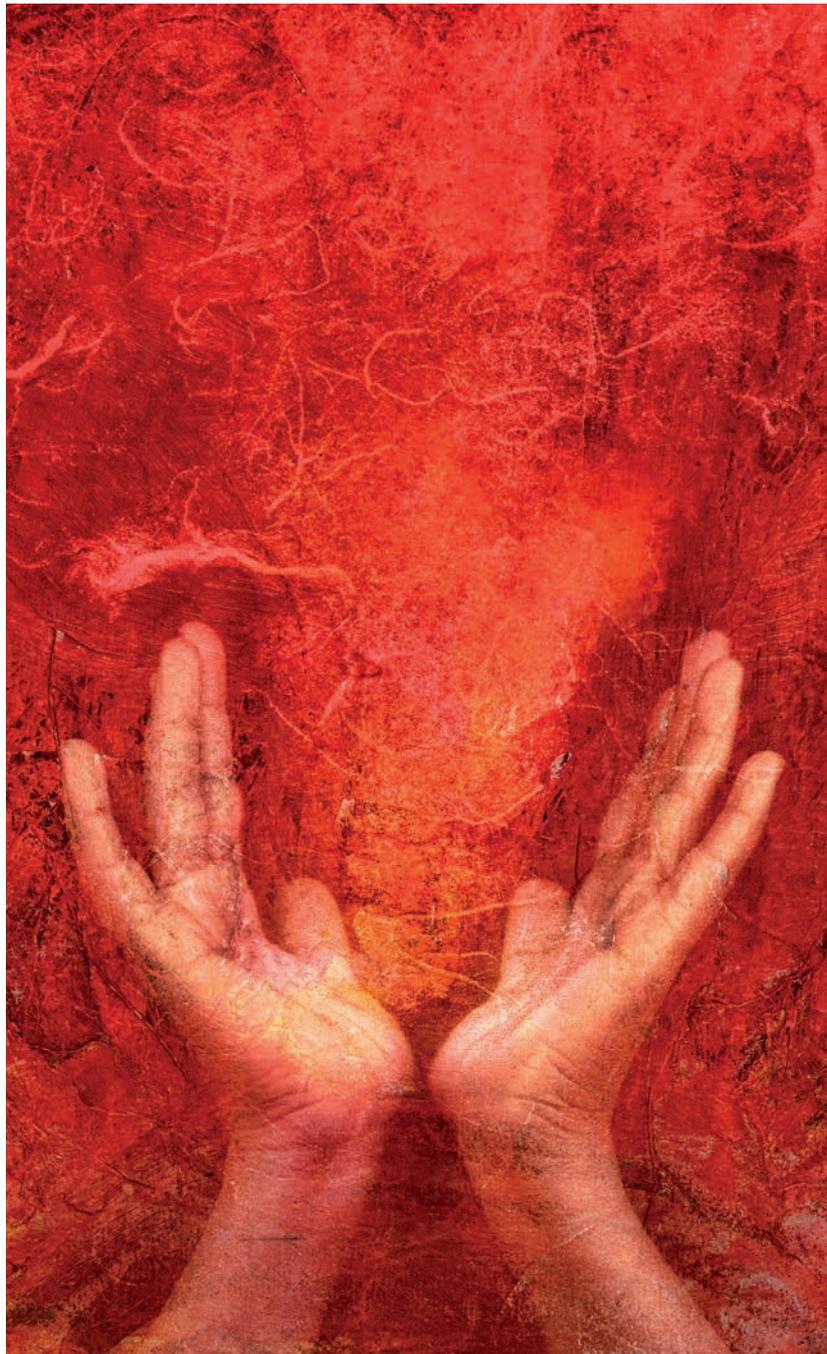
THE MAGIC BANK ACCOUNT

Imagine you won the first prize in a contest: a bank account into which €86,400 are deposited day after day. Now isn't that fantastic! Before you start dreaming, read on...

As the days get shorter and the evenings longer, we long for cozy, contemplative moments, just as the world outside prepares for the consumerism extravaganza of the year... The message "out there" is that life is about time and money. These can indeed serve as measures for success, provided we take the time to define how much of both we really need (and what for), but we shouldn't get too impressed with them...

Have you heard of the Magic Bank Account? Imagine you won a bank account into which €86,400 are deposited day after day. Now isn't that fantastic! Before you start dreaming, here are some rules it comes with:

- 1 Every day, the bank opens your account with € 86,400 for that day.
- 2 Any remaining balance you didn't spend will be deleted at midnight.
- 3 You may not transfer money into other accounts.
- 4 The bank can close the account at any time without notice.





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Professional Accredited Coach, ran a management consultancy for manufacturing companies before becoming a coach. Her clients, company owners and senior managers, realize that their personal growth is instrumental to the success of their personal or professional projects. In her work, she combines the roles of coach, mentor, consultant, strategic thinking partner and psychologist. She is fluent in five languages (one of them Czech) and lives between Hamburg and Prague.

If you'd hit that jackpot, depending on your interest in "stuff", you might go on a spending spree for days or weeks, buy things you've always wanted for yourself and others you cared for. You'd start supporting causes you valued. You'd try and spend every cent; that's what the rules encourage. After all, you'd wake up to a replenished account in the morning anyway. But as you'd get bored with buying more stuff, you might notice that your life still circles around the same things and people that it does now.

In other words, once you'd have adapted to the new level of spend-

ways the image the media conveys, it pays to remember that people who have money – and earned it – tend to expect a lot of themselves...

The "story" behind the magic bank account is deeply moral: the "intended takeaway" is that we should realize that we were all already winners of 86,400 – except that the prize is time: we receive 86,400 seconds every single day.

I believe that we'd take the money for granted soon, much the same way that we take those seconds for granted (which, miraculously, appear day after day, no matter what

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ing, you'd feel about your life much like you do today. This is a surprising thought to many people, but those who have the experience know what I am talking about. These people realized money didn't buy them the life they wanted, and especially, it didn't spare them the effort of becoming who they wanted to be; in a way, on the contrary! Because they couldn't blame "lack of opportunity", they perceived the pressure on them to lead a fulfilled, happy life to be higher. Although this isn't al-

use we made of the last ones). Just as with money, we think that not having enough of those precious seconds is at the root of most of our problems. Really...? I know many people who had to or wanted to "free" themselves of the burden of work; some were wealthy enough to no longer want to work for anybody, or at all. Most have had a rude awakening: they still needed to CREATE a life they loved! It wasn't miraculously there the day they decided to "have all the time in the world". More likely, this was the

moment when inconvenient truths became obvious: after losing their work-related problems, the colleagues, bosses, clients and VPs that kept infuriating them, people realized that the resulting state wasn't pure bliss, but that the "rest of their life" wasn't as enticing as they believed: a life in which they may no longer have a partner they truly relate to, a deep and trusting relationship with their children, or didn't even really know what they enjoyed doing if they weren't working... They also realized that

it takes practice to get back into things they used to enjoy doing, and that their friends – still as busy and unavailable as they used to be – tended to resent their new freedom. And fly-fishing or resort-hopping isn't a good way to spend 12 months a year!

Just having the time, or the money, doesn't do the trick; what we need are the strategies to make them work to our advantage. That's something we cannot delegate responsibility for. It takes a conscious decision to create a life we enjoy, almost irrespective of our financial situation or the commitments that keep us busy. Of course there is a floor below which life is rather miserable. But my point is: even with both "prizes" in our lives, we still have the same parents, children, life partners, attract the same kinds of people and problems into our lives – and now have a much harder time explaining to ourselves why we are still stuck in the same-old-same-old.

Changing the Life You Have Into the Life You Want

So here is the heretical thought – if we don't need all the money and all the time in the world to have the life we love, why not start living the life we love right here and now. I'd argue that it pays to create a BIT MORE of the life of our dreams as often as we can afford to. I don't mean any of this "world is your oyster" nonsense from self-proclaimed saviours of our

souls who promote life-changing experiences. I mean doing the groundwork of shedding the limitations we carry, exposing the false gods that we got used to worshipping, who make it unlikely for us to enjoy our 86,400 seconds, make a difference in the lives of others, and go to bed feeling enriched instead of just tired.

In a way, my clients want to get more out of their 86,400 seconds; most of them realized (or are in the process) that this has not a lot to do with

“Getting more out of your seconds“ has more to do with having a bigger impact and making a difference than with climbing some career ladder...

making more money. It has a lot to do with having a bigger impact and making a difference – not just in the workplace. I remember what the facilitator of my first coaching training used to say. His trainings were at the top end of the market, but he claimed they were actually cheap – as investing into oneself (and specifically, into relationships...) was the best investment in the world. He had a point! Investing money into buying better-quality time is still a challenge for most people. But as I see in my practice, the interest is

growing; I am being approached by people who aren't dramatically unhappy, but feel there could be more in their lives than what they are getting out of their "seconds" as is. I never forget one lady client saying after discussing the price of working with me for 9 months – "So we are talking about the equivalent of a nice fur coat, right? Great, I already have two of those!"

Gratefulness, curiosity and courage (in the sense of being true to your values, and facing your own demons) to me are about success in life, not "climbing some career ladder" – although that may or may not be part of it, depending upon the level of impact you are seeking. Being a competent, trusting and loving grown-

up takes all aspects of courage, and the reward is a life you can truly love. But don't wait for the prize. While life actually isn't so short, I do believe the period in which we can fully enjoy what it has to offer is limited. Which raises the question if it really is such a luxury to spend money on self-development... The definition of luxury obviously varies across people, but for me it's living a life you love, and especially living in peace with yourself. And that, in my experience, attracts all the positive things you need... /BW