

## Eight Weeks of Conversation Café

### Week Four: Lifestyle Topic- The Bucket List

*The Bucket List* is a 2008 movie about two terminally ill men who make a list of things they would like to do before they die. In the movie, they go on adventures dictated by their list: skydiving, flying over the North Pole, riding motorcycles on the Great Wall of China, and going on a lion safari in Africa. Hence, a bucket List is a list of things a person wants to do or accomplish before they die.

The idea of a bucket and death is quite an old connection dating back to the 1600's. Probably the name of the movie comes from a familiar idiom, to "kick the bucket," which means to die. A bucket is another name for a beam on which pigs were raised by their heels in order to slaughter. The pig's spasms look like kicking, hence, kicking the bucket.

<http://www.theguardian.com/notesandqueries/query/0,5753,-2067,00.html>

The following is an excerpt from an article written by Prof. Christopher Peterson, who was the professor of psychology at the University of Michigan to a blog in [www.psychologytoday.com](http://www.psychologytoday.com).

"I did a google search for "my bucket list." The 2.5 million hits, some tiny number of which I read, provide some insight into what many people want to do in order to highlight their lives: travel and see the wonders of the world; have an adventure like white-water rafting; learn a foreign language; meet a celebrity; become rich; or accomplish something really demanding such as running a marathon.

Here are some of my thoughts about bucket lists from the perspective of a positive psychologist.

A bucket list can be an attempt to make life meaningful, depending of course on the specific items. Many of the bucket lists I read contained items that struck me as narcissistic (e.g., get a tattoo), but some did not. These lists contained items that would connect people to something larger than themselves, typically other people and their welfare (e.g., take the entire family on a cruise). Positive psychology research suggests that the latter items are more important for a fulfilled life.

For me, a downside of the phrase bucket list is that it implies a "check off the boxes" approach to life. I hate it when my college students choose courses only to satisfy requirements, and by extrapolation, I hate it when someone approaches life in the same way, even if the requirements are self-set.

And sometimes we do not know what is worth doing until we actually do it and reflect upon it. A sole focus on a bucket list might lead us to overlook other activities that will be memorable or significant, perhaps more so than what we would have thought years or even decades earlier.

In any event, a bucket list is not about dying but about living, and my chief objection to the phrase is simply that it is misleading. I do not think that most people create such lists with their imminent death in mind. Consider this stringent criterion: If you knew with certainty that you would die tomorrow, what would you do today? Would you really choose to spend your last day getting a tattoo?

So, I like the spirit of a bucket list if not the exact phrase. I like exhilarating memories but not to the exclusion of meaningful experiences. And I like lofty goals if they do not obscure the rest of what matters.”

Let's discuss.

1. *Do you have a bucket list? If so, what do you have on your bucket list?*
2. *If you had only 3 months to live what are three things you would do?*
3. *Besides the bucket list, what are some of your life goals?*
4. *Do your beliefs about death or life after death change what you might put on your bucket list?*