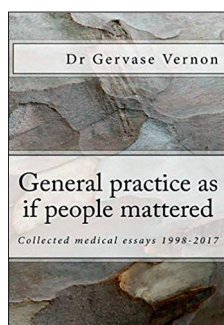


## General Practice as if People Mattered: Collected Medical Essays 1998–2017 Gervase Vernon

CreateSpace Independent Publishing  
Platform, 2018, PB, 202pp, £4.99, 978-  
1984360168



### HUMANS ARE SOCIAL CREATURES

Over decades working as a GP in Essex, a hospital doctor in Malawi, and a medical examiner for Freedom from Torture in London, Dr Gervase Vernon has used writing as a way of exploring and marshalling his thoughts, and contributing to debate. Many of his essays have been published in the *BJGP*, and these are included in this diverse, diverting, and whimsical collection, along with other essays, short stories, a method for teaching medical statistics, and a dissertation on 'non-family carers'.

Vernon's pet themes are 'altruism' and 'the nature of the consultation'. In Vernon's view, people do matter! Indeed, people are the matter of medicine. To effectively and humanely treat patients we need to first understand that humans are social creatures — they exist and feel well or unwell in a social context — and then make sure we understand and communicate within the patient's conceptual framework rather than speaking in the 'monologising discourse' of science.

Pieces cover some of the thorniest and liveliest ethical areas of medical practice: abortion, immunisation, the limits of science, treatment of the most vulnerable, NHS reform, and moral discussions during consultations.

Aspects of Vernon's biography — his Roman Catholicism, his Polish refugee mother — inform his work. Examples include his trenchant defence of the right of refugees and asylum seekers to receive

free health care in the UK, and the difficulty of discussing moral matters when one's personal view (as regards abortion) is at odds with the prevailing winds.

Whatever the topic, this engaging book tirelessly advocates for humility and open-mindedness in medical practice.

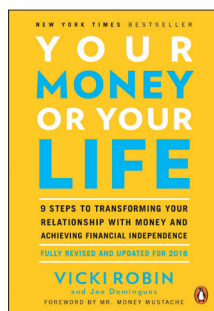
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## Your Money or Your Life: 9 Steps to Transforming your Relationship with Money and Achieving Financial Independence (fully revised and updated for 2018)

**Vicki Robin and Joe Dominguez**  
Penguin Books (USA), 2018, PB, 384pp,  
£6.99, 978-0143115762



### HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?

First published 25 years ago, the revised edition of this bestseller would sit more comfortably in the self-help and personal development section than in business and finance. What is curious from the outset is that only a fraction of the content gives advice on investing. The rest is a philosophical journey asking some truly existential questions of the reader. It was an accidental purchase, as my original intention was to buy a guide to understanding stocks and shares. However, it was this book that cropped up time and again in lists of 'must reads', consistently achieving 5-star reviews. My interest had been piqued. The stock market could wait.

This book is one of those engrossing texts that offers light-bulb moments, that had me sat up in my chair, highlighter in hand, audibly exclaiming my delight and surprise. Why had I never heard anyone talk about money like this before? Early on the author introduces the concept of 'enough' as the goal of personal wealth. She argues that much dissatisfaction, heartache, and environmental damage results from the need to constantly accumulate, consume, and upgrade without sufficient attention to knowing when you actually have enough of the things you really need.

'We try to satisfy essentially psychological and spiritual needs with consumption at a physical level' is a maxim I can relate to personally and to many of the patients I see. The stuff beyond 'enough' is defined as clutter — which is anything in excess. This doesn't just refer to physical items. I found it useful to think of the concept that we often fill our lives with other types of clutter, such as the 'time clutter' of unplanned errands and meaningless activities.

The real juice of the text comes later when the author defines money as 'something you trade your life energy for' and asks the critical question, 'How much life is one willing to sell to have money?'

With this always in mind, the reader is taken through a series of steps intended to define one's personal definition of 'enough' while providing a formula for achieving financial independence: the moment where working for money becomes optional. One of the steps involves calculating your 'real' hourly wage. When I did this, the results came as a shock. As a GP partner I was earning a real hourly wage of just £19 per hour.

This is a book you could recommend to anyone who appears to be dying for a living (selling their life doing something they hate), be they loved ones, colleagues, or patients, to help set them on a path to genuine personal wealth and fulfilment.

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