

Borrowed Time, Chosen Presence

I walked with Richard this morning.
He’s 80.

He spoke calmly about something most of us avoid, time. Not with fear. Not with drama. Just honesty.

"At my age," he said, "anything can happen. You’re on borrowed time."

There was no bitterness in his voice. No urgency to prove anything. Just acceptance.

He isn’t religious. He isn’t philosophical in a textbook sense. He’s lived long enough to know that tomorrow isn’t promised, and worrying about that fact doesn’t add a single meaningful moment to today.

So he chooses presence.

A morning walk.
A coffee.
A chat with a neighbour.
Swapping newspapers.
Small rituals that anchor him to life.

When I asked what he'd say to young people today, his concern wasn't ambition or success. It was distraction.

Phones. Screens. Constant noise.

He spoke about how young people are more stressed than ever, despite having more than any generation before them. More convenience. More comfort. More information. Yet less ease.

Richard grew up with ration cards and limits. Scarcity taught gratitude. Challenge builds resilience. Life wasn't easier but it felt clearer.

He doesn't rush. He doesn't panic if he misses a bus. He once missed a flight to London and simply caught the next one.

"Why worry?" he said.

That sentence lingered with me.

Not as dismissal of pain, but as perspective. The kind you earn by living, losing, adapting, and continuing anyway.

Walking beside him reminded me that peace isn't found in controlling life. It's found in meeting it—one step, one coffee, one honest conversation at a time.

Maybe wisdom isn't loud.
Maybe it just keeps walking.

My Perspective

Walking beside Richard this morning, I wasn't just listening to his words; I was listening to the space between them.

An 80-year-old man speaking calmly about borrowed time has a way of slowing you down. Not because he's saying anything radical, but because he's living it. There was no urgency in him, no resistance to what is. Just presence.

What struck me most wasn't his acceptance of mortality, it was his ease with life as it unfolds.

He doesn't rush outcomes. He doesn't fight inconvenience. A missed bus is just a missed bus. A delayed plan is simply another moment to adapt. There was a quiet strength in that. A strength that comes from knowing what is worth holding tightly, and what isn't.

As we spoke about young people, stress, and technology, I felt a tension many of us carry. We live in an age of abundance, yet we feel increasingly overwhelmed. We have more tools to connect, yet feel more disconnected, from ourselves, from each other, from the present moment.

I shared my belief with Richard: that human beings need challenge. Not suffering that harms, but resistance that shapes us. Something that asks us to engage, adapt, and grow. Without it, comfort can quietly erode resilience.

Watching him walk, I realised something else, we don't suffer because life is hard. We often suffer because we resist life as it is. We argue with reality. We demand certainty where none exists.

Richard doesn't do that.

He meets life where it stands. With curiosity. With humour. With acceptance.

That morning reminded me that perspective isn't about minimising pain or denying struggle. It's about choosing how much of our energy we give to worry, and how much we give to living.

Presence, I'm learning, isn't passive. It's an active choice, made again and again, to show up fully for what's in front of us.

One step.
One conversation.
One breath at a time.

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Reflection for you.

1. If you truly accepted that time isn't guaranteed, what would you do differently today?
2. What small daily rituals help you feel most alive and present?
3. Where has convenience made life easier—but presence harder?
4. What do you worry about that might not matter in five years?
5. If you missed the "bus" in your life, could you allow yourself to catch the next one without self-judgement?
6. What would "carrying on with peace" look like for you right now?

Quotes (From Richard)

- "At my age, anything can happen. You're on borrowed time."
- "Time comes for everyone. Why worry?"
- "You don't know what tomorrow brings, so you live today."
- "I just carry on. Whatever happens, happens."
- "Phones have become people's greatest companion."
- "We had less, but we were grateful—and happier."
- "If I miss the bus, I miss the bus. Why let it worry me?"