

"Is getting rich worth it?"

anonymous author, published in Businessinsider 2014

I made \$15 million in my mid-20s after I sold a tech startup. I talked to a lot of people about this question, and thought a lot about how to stay the same person I was before and after making money.

Here's my answer: being rich is better than not being rich, but it's not nearly as good as you imagine it is.

The answer why is a bit more complicated.

First, one of the only real things being rich gives you is that you don't have to worry about money as much anymore. There will still be some expenses that you cannot afford (and you will wish you could), but most expenses can be made without thinking about what it costs. This is definitely better, without a doubt.

Being rich does come with some downsides, though. The first thing you are thinking reading that, is, "cry me a river". That is one of the downsides. You are not allowed to complain about anything, ever. Since most people imagine being rich as nirvana, you are no longer allowed to have any human needs or frustrations in the public eye. Yet, you are still a human being, but most people don't treat you like one.

There's the second downside. Most people now want something out of you, and it can be harder to figure out whether someone is being nice to you because they like you, or they are being nice to you because of your money. If you aren't married yet, good luck trying to figure out (and/or always having self doubt) about whether a partner is into you or your money.

Then you have friends & family. Hopefully your relationship with them doesn't sour, but it can get harder. Both can get really weird about it and start to treat you differently. They might come and ask for a loan (bad idea: if you give, always give a gift). One common problem is that they don't appreciate Christmas presents the way that they used to, and they can get unrealistic expectations for how large a present should be and be disappointed when you don't meet their unrealistic expectations. You have to start making decisions for your parents on what does and does not cost too much, and frankly, it's awkward.

Add all of these up and you can start to feel a certain sense of isolation.

You sometimes lay awake at night, wondering if you made the right investment decisions, whether it might all go away. You know that feeling standing on a tall building, the feeling you might lose your mind and jump? Sometimes you're worried that you might lose your mind and spend it all.

The next thing you need to understand about money is this: all of the things you picture buying, they are only worthwhile to you because you cannot afford them (or have to work really hard to acquire them). Maybe you have your eye on a new Audi — once you can easily afford it, it just doesn't mean as much to you anymore.

Everything is relative, and you are more or less powerless to that. Yes, the first month you drive the Audi, or eat in a fancy restaurant, you really enjoy it. But then you sort of get used to it. And then you are looking towards the next thing, the next level up. And the problem is that you have reset your expectations, and everything below that level doesn't get you quite as excited anymore.

This happens to everyone. Good people can maintain perspective, actively fight it, and stay grounded. Worse people complain about it and commit general acts of douchebaggery. But remember this: it would happen to you, too, even though you might not think so. You'll just have to trust me on this one.

Most people hold the illusion that if only they had more money, their life would be better and they would be happier. Then they get rich, and that doesn't happen, and it can throw them into a serious life crisis.

If you're part of the middle class, you have just as many opportunities to do with your life what you want of it. If you're not happy now, you won't be happy because of money.

Whether you're rich or not, make your life what you want it to be, and don't use money as an excuse. Go out there, get involved, be active, pursue your passion, and make a difference.