

Editorial: Who needs a Tikker when you've got life?

January 3, 2014

What would you do if you knew exactly how many days you had to live?
How would you feel?

Those questions surfaced during [a radio program](#) I heard while driving to work on the last day of last year. A reporter [narrated a story](#) about a new watch that tells a different sort of time.

"How long until you die?" the reporter asked Frederik Colting, inventor of [Tikker](#).



Editor Marv KnoxNow, that's a cheery question to consider as the clock closes the door on an old year.

To be fair, Colting doesn't pretend to know how long he or anybody will live. Tikker, "a sleek black wristwatch," calculates a longevity algorithm similar to one established by the U.S. government to [estimate life expectancy](#) based on a person's gender and age.

Morbid, right?

That's not how Colting sees it. A former gravedigger, he wanted to create a device to offer perspective on life. He figured a watch that counts down his moments would help him focus on what really matters and appreciate his

life as it ticks away. He thrives on that idea and even calls Tikker “the happiness watch.”

Of course, not everybody tells time that way. The reporter recruited a couple to wear Tickers and watch what happens. In the morning, every petty delay annoyed the wife, while the husband saw even humdrum moments as special. But later, their roles reversed. By the end of the day, the score was Ticker 1, Blissful Ignorance 1.

A toss-up

Even the science behind a mortality countdown is a toss-up. Research reveals that thinking about death [helps some people savor life](#) and causes others to [be more generous](#). But the field of psychology known as [terror management theory](#) indicates many people who consider death become more xenophobic, or hostile to people who are different.

Tikker is scheduled to go on the market in April, but I won’t be lining up to buy one. That’s not because I don’t need a reminder to relish life or to be more benevolent. It’s also not because I’m afraid I’ll develop a pathological dislike for tall, handsome athletes who also sing well.

My problem with Tikker is it offers a false sense of time. Sure, on the one hand, my life expectancy might be another 25.7 or even 28.9 years. But I might die next week. When I think about it, I shouldn’t require a winding-down wristwatch to remind me to find delight in and appreciate every moment. And I shouldn’t count on any moments beyond the present.

The Bible brims with stories about people who took life, not to mention the Creator of life, for granted. The [parable of the rich farmer](#) comes to mind.

One of the blessings of getting older—and, believe me, I didn’t see this coming—is the ability to appreciate life better and more fully. Maybe it’s because young people think they have so much to prove and so much to

achieve that everything has to be a big deal. And so life inevitably feels more disappointing and less rewarding than expected.

Years provide perspective

Years provide perspective. Sure, the special moments and big events are spectacular. But the normal time of regular days, the give-and-take of long friendships, the delights and trials of a strong marriage, the thrill and heartache of parenting, the delight of feasting and grind of dieting—all the stuff of life—cultivate the fertile field where joy, gladness and fulfillment blossom and grow.

Maybe a ticking-down wristwatch would help me appreciate 2014. But I'm guessing the smile of my sweet wife, the voices of family on the phone, shared meals with friends, winter frost and summer heat, enchiladas on a plate, favorite tunes in my earbuds, and silence in church on Sunday morning will be reminders enough.

Happy New Year.