Redefining success: What I learned from commuting

Recent industrial action which affected the service of the railway network in the south-east of England gave me another reason to be glad that I am no longer commuting to work on the trains. A few years ago, my 15-month work contract required a commute of two hours each way by train - that's four hours a day, Monday to Friday. I estimate that in 15 months I spent 1,200 hours (50x 24-hour days) commuting to work.

Despite spending nearly two full months on a train I am rather embarrassed to admit that I did little with that time. I had planned to read lots of books and practice my Spanish grammar and vocabulary before a trip to Central and South America, but instead I watched TV shows on my tablet. In addition, I gained weight - the inevitable result of being inactive (sedentary job and little spare time) and a tendency to eat during long journeys.

Since that contract finished I have chosen to work locally, so that I can walk to work. My experience taught me to be content with less pay and more free time. I have a better relationship with my husband, I eat less and I exercise more when not forced to sit on a train for four hours a day.

Although I have heard stories of more extreme commuting, my experience was sufficient to influence my future decisions. I now lead a simpler life with fewer commitments and expenses. I do not want to work in a higher paid city job that requires a long commute. My plan is to continue to simplify my life so that I am not giving up my time, but material possessions. I want fewer possessions so that I have more time for love. I know that the alternative is to give my time and energy to a job and material goods that do not love me in return.

I want to redefine success: a successful woman is one with time to meet the most important of commitments - to her family, her friends and her own well-being.