

Change together

In our grandparents' era life was pretty well mapped out for us: leave school, get a job, marry, raise a family, work until 65 and then retire.

But in the 21st century diverse lifestyle options are open to us and they don't conform to that simple outline. One of those is the growing tendency for people in mid life to make a total change to their lifestyle.

From a seemingly contented life in the big suburban house they decide that the grass may be greener - and life richer in a different way - by the sea, in the country or by a river. They elect to do a sea-change or tree-change, to use the popular terms.

Mid life is when we often take the time to think about who we are now, the quality of our lives and what we value at this stage, which may be different from earlier on. At this point in our lives we are often financially secure and our children are independent, so suddenly down-sizing is possible and there is a real choice about how we are going to live the rest of our lives.

We have moved past the earlier phase of life where we were focused on career development, buying a house and raising a family.

Technology has also helped in this process. With the advent of laptops and wireless internet networks, it's no longer essential to be in the office full time in order to continue a career. Working from home at least part of the time is a real option.

The danger here is to avoid the isolation that can be caused by a sudden change from a busy and social office environment to a quiet home office.

Though the idea of pulling up stumps and taking off to the beach or country sounds like a dream come true, it's important to temper the dream with reality. You may need to hold off on the decision and research the dream, and see if you can "try before you buy".

It's a good idea to live in the new location for six months and develop your networks there before you make an irrevocable decision to live there full time.

If you can manage it, you might want to have a small home in the city as well as your new abode, allowing you to keep a foot in both camps.

One final word of warning: if you are in a relationship make sure you *both* want the sea-change or tree-change. It has to be something you both want, or you may be buying years of misery along with your new dream.

But if you do your homework, making the change may be the best decision you ever make.

Survival tips

- **Take time to research your planned move and try it out for a few months first**
- **Become part of your new community and get your networks going before making the final decision**
- **If you are in a permanent relationship, make sure you both want the sea-change or it could be a disaster.**