Four years ago I was always in need of time. Back then I worked as one of the art directors at a large advertising agency. The management of the company welcomed the competitive spirit among the employees. We realised that it was a rat race, but we didn't mind. I guess each of us hoped that he or she would be the one on a fast-track to a spectacular career. We were young, mostly single, so for us our job came first. We actually enjoyed the adrenaline buzz and working to tight deadlines. I had a very hectic lifestyle then: getting up early in the morning, going to bed late at night or not going to bed at all if some project needed to be done by the next morning. Also the money was great: I had lots of disposable income, so I could afford designer clothes, the latest gadgets and overpriced status symbols — in fact presenting the proper image mattered a great deal among the artsy, career-obsessed bunch of people I worked with. Once in a while when I was under more pressure than usual, I would go on shopping sprees, buying things I didn't need, which released the tension for a short while. And then, one day I started to suffer from acute stomachaches. I thought it was some sort of a psychosomatic reaction to prolonged stress, but it wasn't. I was diagnosed with stomach ulcers. This came as a shock. Not because my medical condition was so severe, but because I was only 27 years old, and the only person I knew that had ulcers was my grandfather who'd been a heavy smoker for 60 years. At this point, I started to think that maybe my high-powered job was not the best thing that had happened to me in my life. My friends said I was just overworked; they suggested that I change my diet, cut back coffee, do yoga and other things like that, but there was more to it. I grew weary of putting my work on a pedestal, making concessions in terms of my private life to my work. Soon after, I was offered a promotion, which would entail more money and more creative freedom, but also more responsibilities. And I said "no". In fact, during this meeting, I mentioned that I would like to downsize the number of my duties, even if I was to receive a smaller salary, in order to improve my work-life balance. My supervisors had no idea what I was talking about. They wanted to have a pack of bloodthirsty young wolves working for them, and not people who talk about personal growth and family life. After a week or so, I was pretty much encouraged to leave the company, which I did with little regret. I opted for downshifting in terms of my professional life. These days I teach at the local College of Arts and I'm a freelance copywriter. Money-wise it's much worse, but here we go: it's 11 a.m., Tuesday morning, and I can sit at home wearing a worn-out jeans and a plain T-shirt, drinking tea and reading a book. It really is worth it.

Text Dependent Questions:

1. What was the narrator's job four years ago?

A) Teacher
B) Art director
C) Copywriter
D) Freelancer

2. Why did the employees at the advertising agency not mind the competitive spirit?

A) They enjoyed working under pressure
B) They wanted to show off their skills
C) They hoped for a promotion
D) They wanted to have a spectacular career

3. What did the narrator's lifestyle involve?

A) Waking up late in the morning

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B) Going to bed early at night
C) Working on projects until late at night
D) Taking breaks from work

4. Why did the narrator go on shopping sprees occasionally?
A) To release tension
B) To keep up with the latest trends
C) To impress colleagues
D) To show off their disposable income

5. What was the narrator diagnosed with?
A) Stress
B) Stomach ulcers
C) Psychosomatic reactions
D) Acute stomachaches

6. What made the narrator realize that their high-powered job might not be the best thing for them?
A) Their diagnosis of stomach ulcers
B) Advice from friends
C) A promotion offer
D) Feeling overworked

7. What did the narrator suggest during the meeting about their job?
A) Downsize the number of duties
B) Seek a pay raise
C) Quit the job
D) Accept the promotion

8. How did the supervisors react to the narrator's suggestion?
A) They supported the idea
B) They encouraged the narrator to leave
C) They offered more creative freedom
D) They didn't understand the request

9. What is the narrator's current profession?
A) Art director
B) Teacher
C) Copywriter
D) Freelancer

10. How does the narrator feel about their current work-life balance?
A) Regretful
B) Satisfied
C) Stressed
D) Ambivalent

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