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Acceptance

I confess acceptance of things in life as they are doesn't come easily for me. I often quote – "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change."

I think this is the case for most people.

Serenity comes when you trade expectations for acceptance. - Gautama Buddha

We want things to go our way. Whether it is getting a date for the high school dance, getting into the college of our choice, landing the job we dream of, or marrying someone who does things our way. Or it can be more life altering situations like: wanting our child to be well, wishing we could get pregnant, and finally wanting a loved one to live when they are obviously dying.

Young children (and some adults) throw temper tantrums when they can't accept reality.

Research shows that poor impulse control is linked with impaired decision-making and the development of mental health conditions. So, the more impulse control your child gains, the less likely they'll be to do or say something that can harm others and themselves—and they'll be more likely to have positive mental health.— Najati V. Ajitchi

Accepting reality is not easy. Wise teachers seem to have the ability to go with the flow, accepting rather than resisting events that most of us consider wrong.

Accepting Life's Disappointments

When I taught children with special needs, I learned that the parents of those children who accepted the situation were much more likely to have a happier, more stable home than the ones who resisted the reality. I'm not saying this was easy. It was not.

Working with families of children with disabilities I saw this first hand. There was no correcting the circumstances. Life dealt them a hand that certainly didn't seem fair. And

yet I watched exceptional love and care as they lived through what many of us would call a major life disappointment.

Unfortunately, the divorce rate in these families is about 87%. Many mothers are left to accept a situation that is stressful and demanding. I suspect the inability of the father to accept the disability of his child had a lot to do with most of the divorces.

Acceptance of Death of Loved One

Reality smacks us in the face and doesn't back down. We still resist. How futile is that? Death of a loved one is often resisted. Even when we know the person is gone, we may be in denial for a brief time. At some point we come to acceptance and that is when the healing can begin.

Acceptance of a Person

When you are able to accept a person as they are, without judgement or insisting that they shouldn't be a certain way, you've achieved a quality most humans never do. Can you accept the reality of an unpleasant circumstance without judgement or retaliation against it?

Acceptance of what has happened is the first step to overcoming the consequences of any misfortune.— William James

Boundaries

What if I told you—this one topic can change your life forever? Healthy boundaries bring a level of success to those who have them. Women often have difficulties in this area. Unhealthy or nonexistent boundaries are the source of many of the issues that I notice when I coach women. Boundaries are also the source of many of the difficulties that I notice when I talk with single mothers.

What are boundaries?

We usually think of boundaries as fences or barriers to keep us out of an area or to keep children and pets in. Personal boundaries come as the result of healthy thinking and a strong self-esteem. When you are sure of yourself and have confidence, you will not have too much trouble setting boundaries. And when you do you will free yourself to spend your energies as you should and not in ways that others demand you do.

Do you tend to let yourself be pushed around? Do you give in even when it goes against your better judgment? At work do you know what your responsibilities are? Or do you find yourself taking on responsibilities of others when asked? Are you the one your coworkers ask to cover for them because they know you can't say no? Are you a people pleaser to your own detriment?

Psychological boundaries are the thoughts and opinions that we hold. Do you shift yours when under pressure from others? Do you allow yourself to be controlled by the opinions of others? Or are you on the other side of the fence—you try to force your own way of thinking on others?

To build healthy boundaries in your life you will need to do some serious self-reflection. Our motivations will reveal a great deal about our setting of boundaries and how we react to those with whom we interact. I've known women who thought they were serving others when, in fact, they were performing with the desire for approval and admiration from others. It's the motivation that tells the tale.

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Healthy personal boundaries keep us from bad habits, help us eat healthy, and prevent illness. They also build respect on the job and establish clear expectations.

Courage

Whatever you think courage is, think again.

We know Courage (also called bravery or valor) is the choice and willingness to confront agony, pain, danger, uncertainty, or intimidation.

But did you know the root of the word courage is cor - the Latin word for heart?

In one of its earliest forms, the word courage meant "To speak one's mind by telling all one's heart."

Oh my, that struck a chord with me. Courage in my mind was always a big word indicating big fears like death and disease. Courage is often thought of as facing some fate worse than death. In truth most of us will not have to face a horrific situation.

However, you will, if you haven't already, face a very real situation requiring actual courage – 'to speak one's mind by telling one's heart.'

I had not considered that speaking my mind and revealing my heart was courageous. And yet on many occasions my deep desire for belonging and acceptance kept me from sharing my heart in a truly honest way.

Are you being authentic? Are you truly living the life you were created to live? Authenticity takes courage.

For me it was standing in front of a judge pleading my case during a contentious divorce. Dealing with an intimidator, and I was, required courage. It requires courage for single mothers to take their ex to court for child support. It takes courage for women to leave abusive relationships. And yet this past year we've seen women come forward to expose abuse in the past by, in many cases, men in powerful positions. That required courage.

Staying small

So many women spend their lives playing small. I call it ungodly contentment. We find a quiet little corner in the world and spend our days maintaining a comfortable nest. Though, of course, such work can be a holy endeavor, it can also be an escape; an unholy refusal to live the life of transformation and faith God is calling us to live. Our penchant for playing small can sabotage our growth and our calling to shine. – Janet Davis, *My Own Worst Enemy*

You are not small.

In 1971 when I was a newlywed Helen Reddy released a song, "I am Woman Hear me Roar."

She wrote:

"Oh yes I am wise, but it's wisdom born of pain.
Yes, I've paid the price but look how much I gained.
If I have to I can do anything,
I am strong."

I needed to hear those words at the time.

Facing fear

The most serious regret of my life came many years later. I was not strong, not wise, and not courageous. I should've confronted my ex when he didn't keep his word regarding promises when our sons were in his care. I simply didn't have the courage to deal with his strong intimidation. You might say he had my number. This regret goes deep.

My hope is that you will face the gremlins that prevent you from standing your ground. Sometimes it is necessary to face down the gremlins in your head when they ask you the question, "Just who do you think you are?" If you hear that gremlin sitting on your shoulder, whispering in your ear words that cause you to doubt yourself, face him down. When you hear those words, have an answer.

Overcoming Criticism

If you fear the sting of criticism, if you are worn out from striving, and come short over and over, know that your enthusiasm and devotion is worth the effort. Perseverance develops courage and wisdom.

I like the way Theodore Roosevelt said it,

"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong woman stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the woman who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends *herself* in a worthy

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cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if she fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that her place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.”

My challenge for you is to recognize the gremlins, face them down and realize the strength you have as a woman.

Determination

Continuing even when things get tough is determination. Wisdom doesn't come easily. It comes over time when you are determined.

It is easy to give up. It is easy to procrastinate. It is easy to quit.

When I found myself divorced with three young children I was devastated. After a long while my determination kicked in.

I taught school for a few years and realized my salary would not increase significantly unless I had a master's degree. When my children were nine, seven, and six years old, I made the decision to return to college.

The process was not all smooth travels. For acceptance into graduate school, I had to jump several hurdles. I didn't quite make the cut to test out for automatic admission to the graduate school at The University of Texas at Austin. This meant I'd have to gather letters of recommendation, transcripts, fill out more forms, and meet with the dean in order to be accepted on probation. Swallowing my pride did not go down easily.

I could have given up at that point. I could've said, "Maybe this isn't meant to be." Instead I drove to Austin and had a brief meeting with the dean as a formality. He nodded, signed a paper, and I was accepted. It was my first inkling that *determination*, not great skill, is a big part of reaching a goal.

I still would have to make arrangements for the care of three children while I was in class. Most openings in the nice childcare centers were not available just for the summer. I was told, "Parents pay for spots to hold them even if they aren't using them in the summer."

The University had an office for "returning students" that gave me a list of 100 childcare centers in Austin. They had everything from tiny home-based centers to huge kid zoos. I wasn't having any luck finding an acceptable place until the day I visited St. Martin's Lutheran.

The elderly director gave me a VIP tour. Then she asked, "May I sign up your children?" Stunned I asked, "You know I have *three* children?" She said she did and I was able to enroll all three in one of the highest quality day cares in Austin.

The last piece in the puzzle was housing. It was too late to qualify for university housing. Time was running out. The deadline for getting the down payments for tuition and childcare was quickly approaching. Shortly before the last week to back out my old friend who lived in Austin called, "I've found an apartment that you can sublet. It is in a complex in the Clarksville area. You can lease it for the summer."

Even with the pieces coming together I didn't know how I would manage this major undertaking and all the changes for the kids. But I was determined.

The shuttle bus system ran like a spider-web across the city with stops all over the university campus. Imagine my surprise when I learned the bus stopped at the corner near our apartment and drove directly to the corner of St. Martin's Lutheran. A bus from the daycare center stopped in front of the education building where all my classes took place. This was truly amazing considering the 437-acre campus of The University of Texas.

The odds of my figuring all that out and making it happen in my own power were slim, but divine synchronicities prepared the way for me. After three summers on our final trek home my children put a poster on the back of our station wagon: "Hurray, hurray. We're happy as can be. Mom finally finished at UT."

Since then, I have seen many women achieve hard goals. Even simple tasks require determination. Whatever your goal *determination* is the key-determination that leads to wisdom.

Enthusiasm

Enthusiasm is a Greek word meaning “possessed by god, inspired.”

It is a combination of two Greek words: “en” meaning “within,” and “theos,” meaning “God” come together to make *enthusiasm*. Enthusiasm helps us get through this crazy, often confusing, life.

Most people wouldn’t call me enthusiastic. Those who don’t really know me, that is. I may not exhibit lots of excitement on the outside. But as my dad used to say, “I’m just bubbling over inside.” I may not be enthusiastic over some events that excite most people like winning a game or a race.

I can become completely enthralled, however, over watching Monarch caterpillars transform into butterflies. I am always enthused when one of my plants blooms for the first time. I’m especially thrilled to see a single mom graduate from college and go on to build a life for her family. And nothing measures up to seeing a new grandbaby for the first time.

You may show enthusiasm in your way while others become inspired in their ways. That is okay.

Enthusiasm can be a quiet pleasure. Today it’s raining and I am enjoying the cooler temperatures. It enthuses me because it feeds the plants I love so much. To me I see *theos* in that. However, many people in our area would rather not see another drop coming from the sky. I’m also enthusiastic about learning. I’d like to learn something new every day. I devour books that teach me something I didn’t already know.

Whatever you are, if you are enthusiastic, it’s my bet that you have a passion for life. I have a feeling that you don’t hang around with toxic people, and that other inspired

people like to be with you. You are probably a person who accepts the risks that come your way. You are not frightened and you are willing to work hard.

Enthusiasm for life reminds me of little Mattie Stepanek who died of a rare disorder at the tender age of thirteen. He taught love in his *Heartsongs* poetry books. His enthusiasm touched anyone who carefully listened. President Jimmy Carter described Mattie as, “the most extraordinary person whom I have ever known.” Oprah Winfrey names him as one of her all time most memorable guests in the 25-year history of her show. His gift to us was enthusiasm. In spite of his major terminal illness he said, “We all have life storms, and when we get the rough times and we recover from them, we should celebrate that we got through it. No matter how bad it may seem, there’s always something beautiful that you can find.”

People who have done well in the world are usually enthusiastic. However, they often failed before they succeeded. Here are twelve who knew disappointment and failure before they succeeded. See if you recognize them: Jim Carrey, Katy Perry, Oprah, Jay Z, J.K. Rowling, Stephen King, Bill Gates, Henry Ford, Colonel Sanders, Thomas Edison, Walt Disney, and Sir J. Dyson. Each of these went on to achieve major success because they had enthusiasm.

Aldous Huxley said, “The secret of genius is to carry the spirit of the child into old age, which means never losing your enthusiasm.” I say, the secret of *wisdom* is to capture your enthusiasm, hold it close and life will be an inspired adventure.

Enthusiasm is the electricity of life. - Gordon Parks

Finan-Sense

We live in interesting times. People think nothing of spending \$5 for a cup of coffee with added fluffy cream. Purses that cost hundreds, if not thousands of dollars, contain very little cash. Artificial nails cost \$18-30 and have to be “filled” every three weeks. For millennials ages 25-34, the average debt is \$42,000 and most is not student loans. The average debt of the American household is \$137,063.

Natalie Pace, author of *The ABCs of Money*, says, “A debt problem is, at its core, a budgeting problem.” If you are living paycheck to paycheck a budget will make a huge difference in your future.

All the wise people I know have financial sense. They understand how to manage money. They understand how to add and subtract. You cannot subtract more than you add to your bank account. Spending more money than you have is not acceptable. Money is simple. It is a commodity of exchange we receive for our time, our skill. So why do so many have so little financial sense?

A budget and a realistic attitude about money is essential. Real success comes when you are totally aware of how much you spend. Kumiko Love, The Budget Mom says, “I’m a huge believer that you cannot create a realistic budget that will work for you until you know your realistic spending.” She should know. Even as a single mother she paid off \$77,000 in student loans in three years.

When I was a single mom and every dollar was stretched to the max, I used various methods and learned how to manage with the money that came in. I became aware that my children learned about money from me. All children develop their financial sense at home.

Children learn young about the value of money and how to budget even on their allowances. Of course, they learn best by your example. I interviewed a friend for my book, “Living Learning Loving.” Her example speaks to this issue.

One of the most important lessons that a lack of money can help us learn is the difference between needing or wanting something. A young mother with two daughters who had been single for seven years at the time-shared this key lesson with me, “You must keep your focus.” She said she repeatedly taught her girls the difference between needing and wanting.

She didn’t just bark, “You don’t need that,” she sat down with them and explained the difference between wanting and needing. She was a wise woman, because she knew that sometimes it’s easier to show your children the difference between needing and wanting than just explaining it to them. Even though she struggled to make ends meet, she found the time and the giving spirit to do community service and shared that experience with her girls by having them participate with her.

It became a family tradition during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, to volunteer their time feeding the homeless or delivering meal packages to the shut-ins as their way of giving back for the times people had helped them. Her children could see with their own eyes what real need was, so when the topic of, “I need a new _____” came up at their home, all she had to say was, “Is it a need or a want?” and the girls knew what she was talking about. By learning to focus, they understood the difference between a need and a want.

The younger a person learns to plan for the future, the better their financial future will be. Your attitude about money will color not only your life but will carry over to your children. In fact, their approach to money will be formed before they leave home.

Some live a fatalistic financial life. They think they will never get out of debt and do not have the discipline to live with a budget. No thought is given to planning. I hope this isn’t you. I hope your future will be bright and filled with financial wisdom.

Maybe the next time you want a cappuccino, order a cup of coffee instead.

Gratitude

Gratitude turns what we have into enough. – Aesop

Gratitude is almost a buzzword these days. In case you don't know a buzzword is a word or phrase that is overused and loses its original power like awesome and actually. Gratitude journals are common at gift shops. I have a gratitude app on my phone. It reminds me throughout the day to be grateful. I get a chime with a message such as "write about a time when a loved one did something nice for you."

It seems to me that gratitude goes deeper than a simple, little thank you to God, another person or the universe. Gratitude is a huge thank you!

When I was a single mother, I was grateful to be able to buy a house. It was old but near my mother and the location made it perfect for us. When the hot water heater broke and was finally replaced, I was really grateful to have hot water again. After the refrigerator compressor went out during a brownout, I was grateful when I was able to replace it.

Gratitude can be relative. Here in the United States, we feel entitled to a certain standard of living. Hot water and refrigeration are taken for granted. This is not so in some places on earth where refrigeration would be an amazing blessing for which people would feel genuine gratitude.

We experience abundance and joy more fully after experiencing lack and heartache. We appreciate the sunshine more after days and days of gloomy, rainy weather. We are more grateful for our health after we recover from the flu.

Deep gratitude changes us. It shifts our thoughts and our point of view. To do this we must have a holistic view of the world. We must exercise a depth of understanding of how the world works and our place in it. If we isolate and don't have much contact with the world around us we are not likely to be as grateful as the person who is involved with society, the person who realizes she is surrounded by pluses as well as negatives. A study was done in which people who were considered wise were shown to demonstrate more gratitude than others who were not considered wise. I'd never thought of wisdom and gratitude as related to each other until I wrote this article. People

who look at the world and value it are usually wise and it is reasonable to expect them to be grateful.

In another study gratitude was shown to improve mental health as reported by Joel Wong Ph.D. at Indiana University. He states, "Much of our time and energy is spent pursuing things we currently don't have. Gratitude reverses our priorities to help us appreciate the people and things we do."

From Harvard Medical School, "In positive psychology research, gratitude is strongly and consistently associated with greater happiness. Gratitude helps people feel more positive emotions, relish good experiences, improve their health, deal with adversity, and build strong relationships."

The older I grow and the more I know, the more grateful I am. I have lived through enough to appreciate simple treasured moments with people I love, moments of freedom to read a book and moments to enjoy our world.

No, everything is not as I would like it to be. There are many, oh so many, things I'd like to change. Yet I also know I have more, way more, than my share to be grateful for. And I am. Gratitude is not a buzzword for me.

If the only prayer you said in your whole life was "thank you" that would suffice.

– Meister Eckhart

Humility

We are not a nation that rewards or even respects humility. And yet humility is considered a virtue.

We love Garrison Keillor's words about his fictitious town of Wobegon where "all the women are strong, the men good-looking and all the children are above average" – no humility there.

Humility, a trait of the wise, is the quality of the insightful. They know how little they know and aren't arrogant.

A few famous people come to mind like Pope Francis, Warren Buffett, Jose Mujica, Uruguay's former president, Joyce Banda, first female president of Malawi. Dutch Prime Minister, Mark Rutte.

You probably don't know some of these people. Jose Mujica, for example, after being elected in 2009, donated all his money to charity and shunned the opulent presidential mansion to live a life of simplicity on a farm with his wife.

Joyce Banda, another example, let go of a presidential jet and sixty Mercedes in order to uplift the financial predicament of her country.

Mark Rutte cycles to work everyday and also teaches in a school once a week.

Among the rich and famous who are considered to be humble in spite of their fame include: Will Smith, Leonardo DiCaprio, Johnny Depp, Keanu Reeves, Tom Hanks and Selena Gomez. I would also include Oprah in that list as she is often quoted to say "we are all 99.9% the same." Eisenhower, a general and a president, was also considered a humble man.

Most buy into the myth that if you are humble, you are weak. Not so.

Dr. Robert Hogan, an American psychologist, known for his innovations as an international authority on personality assessment and leadership in organizational effectiveness, states that humility and confidence together make for good leaders.

Humility requires that you see yourself accurately, appreciate input from others, and are willing to accept new ideas from them.

Being humble doesn't mean you have no ambition. It does mean you use your position for the family, group, organization or country you serve.

Our actions in the United States demonstrate that we have more respect for winning than taking a place of humility.

Mother Teresa comes to mind as one of the few humble people we have come to honor and she had something to say on this subject.

Mother Teresa kept a list of ways to cultivate humility for the sisters in her care.

1. Speak as little as possible about yourself.
2. Keep busy with your own affairs and not those of others.
3. Avoid curiosity (she is referring to wanting to know things that should not concern you.)
4. Do not interfere in the affairs of others.
5. Accept small irritations with good humor.
6. Do not dwell on the faults of others.
7. Accept censures even if unmerited.
8. Give in to the will of others.
9. Accept insults and injuries.
10. Accept contempt, being forgotten and disregarded.
11. Be courteous and delicate even when provoked by someone.
12. Do not seek to be admired and loved.
13. Do not protect yourself behind your own dignity.
14. Give in, in discussions, even when you are right.
15. Choose always the more difficult task.

What a challenge she presents for all of us.

If you are truly humble – do you know it?

*True humility is not thinking less of yourself;
it is thinking of yourself less. – C.S. Lewis*

Integrity

Wisdom knows the right way. Integrity lives it all day, every day. Integrity means you say yes to truth internally then live life saying yes even when it is difficult.

Integrity is unwavering honesty that lives in the heart of the individual. Most of us have experienced situations when someone either didn't want to acknowledge truth or felt it was inconvenient. Integrity might not be so rare if it did not cost us anything. It isn't cheap. Maintaining integrity can cost us dearly.

I have found myself in work situations when leadership surprised me with their lack of integrity. I've watched the Nixon Watergate trials while pregnant with my first child, and was intrigued by testimonies of men of integrity - and not. Integrity is as important today as it ever was. It never loses its value. It never goes out of style.

Why is integrity so important? Without it we live in an unstable world. Who do we trust? Who is telling the truth? How do we make important decisions if we cannot determine the integrity of our leaders? A person with integrity acts and speaks consistently with his inner values even during times of conflict or opposition and sometimes real danger.

Gandhi is a perfect example of integrity. He held his ground peacefully while the British violently abused his people. He remained true to his values, even to his death.

Another example of a person of integrity is Nelson Mandela. "For Mandela, the moral integrity of a leader was crucial. And this was why he was so respected even by his opponents." - Independent.com.

After twenty-seven years in prison Mandela walked out a free man, forgave those who mistreated him, and went on to become the first black President of South Africa. He always practiced what he preached. In 1993 he received the Nobel Peace Prize.

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Numerous examples of people with integrity are Nobel Peace Prize recipients. Most of them exhibited the inner commitment to personal values in spite of intense opposition. Maybe we would have a less contentious world if we made these our heroes instead of rock stars and athletes.

A few Nobel Peace Prize winners and the years they won the prize:

1986 - Elie Wiesel was a political activist and Holocaust survivor. The Norwegian Nobel Committee called him a “messenger to mankind.” He was committed to peace, atonement and human dignity for all repressed people.

1992 - Rigoberta Menchú, a human rights activist from Guatemala, who dedicated her life to publicizing the rights of Guatemala’s indigenous peoples during and after the Guatemalan Civil War.

1997 - Jody Williams, an American political activist, known for her work in banning landmines, her defense of human rights, and her efforts to promote new understandings of security in today’s world.

2003 - Shirin Ebadi was the first Iranian to receive the prize. She founded the Defenders of Human Rights Center in Iran. The then president of Iran criticized it as political. In 2004, she was listed by *Forbes* magazine as one the “100 most powerful women in the world.”

2011- Leymah Gbowee, a Liberian peace activist, best known for bringing Christian and Muslim women together and leading a women’s nonviolent peace movement helping bring an end to the second Liberian Civil War in 2003.

2014 - Malala Yousafzai, is a Pakistani activist for female education, and the youngest Nobel Prize laureate ever. She refused to stop advocating for girls’ education even

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after being seriously injured in an assassination attempt in retaliation for her activism.

People with integrity do not waver. They are steady and trustworthy. They are wise.

Wisdom is knowing the right path to take. Integrity is taking it.

- M.H. McKee

Justice

Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts. – Amos 5:15

I crave justice. Not like chocolate, it's a deeper heart yearning that even a bite of pleasure won't satisfy. I yearn to live in a country where there is a justice system, not a complex legal system. The human heart recognizes justice. The court may not. Of course, we need laws. I'm not for a minute suggesting that we don't need laws. It is just that we already have laws on the books and we still have the distorted attitudes of our fellow humans.

My husband and I like to watch some of the British who-done-it series. Recently there was a long unsolved cold case in which three people could have been considered guilty by the law. However, and this is a big however, each of them had spent the last thirty years contributing to society in a huge way. In addition to that the people they did away with thirty years earlier were each undeniably guilty of causing serious harm to children. Since there was not enough evidence to prosecute them, nothing was done. It seems just.

Justice is sometimes served when the law just doesn't fit. Of course, this is a very gray area. Still, we ought not take the law into our own hands even when we think we are justified. (Pun intended) That is what the masses do whenever they have endured injustices for long periods of time with no relief. It isn't pretty and lots of people are hurt. It is vengeful.

"Revenge is a kind of wild justice," as Sir Francis Bacon, said in 1625. In its wildness it is consumed and recreates worse than that which it avenges. Vengeance becomes the judge, not reason.

Biased attitudes on all sides create chaos. We cannot legislate attitude. It is taught by parents and grandparents to their young children. Children do follow their parents' examples. They remember best, however, what they learn experientially. They learn from their playmates on the playground and in the classroom. If you are white and your children do not have playmates of color, they will only learn by what they hear you say or how they see you interact with people who may not look like them.

Though children will follow their parent's lead I think the heart of the child knows when something is not just. One of my earliest memories was in the White House department

store in downtown Beaumont when I was taken to the water fountain for a drink. I could read simple words and I knew what I read there was not fair. "White Only" on a sign above one of the fountains. That was probably sixty-seven years ago. A child's heart knew it was wrong. We may not have signs on water fountains but we carry prejudice in our hearts. It was wrong then and it is wrong now. It is not just. I dare say some Americans would like to keep us all separated into our racial groups. How pathetic. We should all be outraged.

It is past time for a society in which we live together in harmony. It is time for a change of heart.

Justice and the law do not always match. But human hearts know one another.

Wherever you see justice you will recognize it as fair. Even children recognize fair until adults distort it. Pure justice is simple and an essential ingredient of wisdom.

Justice will not be served until those who are unaffected are as outraged as those who are.

– Ben Franklin

Knowledge

Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family. – Kofi Annan

Knowledge is information, understanding of a subject, facts and skills that will improve a person's life. You cannot possess wisdom without knowledge.

Having knowledge can mean just knowing things like the child prodigy who can recite loads of information. He doesn't possess wisdom. He just knows stuff. You can be really smart without knowledge of your true self, the most challenging knowledge of all.

Knowledge is gained in countless ways. We usually think in terms of education. Eager learners will gain knowledge from a teacher. Once knowledge is gained you have it in your *knowledge bank* and others cannot take it from you. Even though I have an excessive amount of formal *education* that does not necessarily convert to knowledge.

It may just be loads and loads of facts with little application. Knowledge is what the student takes-in that will make his or her life better. In some cases, knowledge makes huge changes in the student's earning potential provided she transfers the knowledge to application.

My children are life-long learners without advanced formal education and doing very well. My father had a vast amount of knowledge but very little education. His knowledge did convert to wisdom.

Knowledge makes a difference for all of us. Knowledge changes our lives. You have knowledge to thank for: modern medicine including early detection of serious diseases, transportation advances, and worldwide communication via satellites.

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Some knowledge comes through experience. Thomas Edison tried 1,000 unsuccessful attempts at creating a light bulb. With each unsuccessful attempt he gained knowledge of what didn't work.

Some knowledge comes to great minds that studied to learn like Marie Currie. Her discovery of radioactive elements made your X-rays possible. She is also credited with having said, "Be less curious about people and more curious about ideas." Ideas come with knowledge.

Some knowledge comes with observation. Sir Isaac Newton realized that a gravitational force exists between all objects. Of course, he is also credited for "discovering" calculus.

Some knowledge comes by reading. When the reader is willing to apply the written word to their lives, knowledge is gained. Frederick Douglass, a slave, learned to read and against all odds, eventually became a social reformer, orator and statesman. But if the reader is unwilling to adopt a teachable spirit little is gained and certainly not wisdom.

Leonardo Di Vinci's curiosity led to his wide-ranging knowledge and lifelong learning.

We are indebted to Di Vinci for the parachute, the armored tank, diving suits and much more.

The greatest of all knowledge is knowing oneself. As Lao Tzu said, "Knowing others is intelligence; knowing yourself is true wisdom. Mastering others is strength; mastering yourself is true power." It is so easy to find the fault in others. To know our own faults isn't so easy. Self-awareness takes effort.

As I began my studies of personality types about twenty years ago, I gained lots of self-knowledge. My sister, Helen, eight years my senior, attended the first personality conference with me. The night before we began, she asked me about my personality

profile. When I told her how mine came out, she laughed and said, “Oh, no! That is not you!” Since she knew me well, I gave-in and went along as she had me redo the entire forty-point profile. And guess what? I didn’t know myself so well. Since then, I’ve become more self-aware through personality studies and the journey has been worthwhile.

Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom. - Aristotle

Loyalty

Loyalty is a tricky thing. A wise person knows when loyalty is deserved and when it isn't.

A wise person is loyal only to those who have earned it.

You cannot buy loyalty; you cannot buy the devotion of hearts, minds, and souls. You have to earn these things.

— Clarence Francis, former Chairman of the Board for General Foods

When we think of loyalty, most of us think in terms of friendships. I surveyed my friends about what loyalty is and received numerous replies, all involving being true to someone. They included phrases like, "Loving faithfully and fiercely even in the midst of hard times." According to the book of Samuel in the Old Testament, during the reign of King Saul, Jonathan, his son, and David developed a friendship and loyalty that surpassed even Jonathan's relationship with his father.

Loyalty in a troubled marriage can be paralyzing. People who remain in abusive relationships may be misplacing loyalty to an undeserving partner. In some cases, distorted loyalty is dangerous.

As a kid I thought loyalty in friendship was a given until my best friend betrayed me. The pain I experienced was new to me. I was naive and didn't know that not everyone has the same loyalty in relationships that I had. I learned that loyalty is earned, not given like a party favor.

I recall parents when I was an educator, who thought they should be loyal to a misbehaving child rather than insisting the child owned his/her wrong-doing. That is not loyalty. It is egocentric denial.

Another memory is learning how labor unions worked and what it meant to “cross the picket line.” I saw a conflict of loyalties between caring for family and being a loyal union member.

People get confused about loyalty to our country, even to our flag. Our military commits to loyalty. We need that kind of loyalty in order to have a safe nation. We also need to recognize that the people who hold office in Washington are not necessarily honest representatives of our whole nation.

Loyalty to the Nation all the time, loyalty to the Government when it deserves it.

–Mark Twain

Loyalty to a group can go all wrong. Devotees become part of the movement and lose sight of the truth. Misplaced loyalty is dangerous. “True Believers” think they are being loyal when, in fact, they are fanatical and part of a movement that causes harm, such as, revolutions, civil wars, the Crusades and the Third Reich. (Read *True Believers* by Eric Hoffer) In the January 6, 2021 riots on the Capitol people completely lost sight of the issues and compounded the problems they were rebelling against, not demonstrating loyalty to their cause.

People light-heartedly say she “drank the Kool-Aid” without recalling where the phrase originated. Most are probably too young. It became a phrase for being loyal when it was certainly not wise to do so.

Jim Jones was an American cult leader who moved his congregation to Guyana where, in 1978 he ordered and likely coerced a mass suicide and mass murder of 918 commune members with cyanide-poisoned Kool-Aid. So “drinking the Kool-Aid” has

become the catch phrase for following blindly or maintaining loyalty even to the most horrid of leaders. There is nothing light-hearted about it.

Knowing when to be loyal is wise. The wise person is loyal with care.

Mercy

Mercy is most precious when it is least deserved.

We are a judgmental people. We find fault with those who don't hold our views and we have our ideas of what should happen to them. Only a wise person knows when mercy is needed. Wisdom doesn't necessarily come from a judge or jury. It comes from the heart.

We ought to give it more than lip service.

You may recall hearing your mother say, "Lord, have mercy!" or "Mercy me." Mercy is used in naming facilities such as Mercy Medical Center, Mercy Health System and Sisters of Mercy. Has the true meaning of mercy lost its flavor? Mercy is more than a word. It is compassion and forgiveness in action.

I wasn't merciful as a young person. It was after life knocked me down a few notches that I came to have compassion for others. After a divorce and raising children as a single mother, I developed a heart for other women traveling that rough road.

When I started working with single mothers, I established the nonprofit, SMORE for Women (Single Mothers – Overjoyed, Rejuvenated and Empowered!). I thought that we could offer them a day or a weekend of time-off, give them a few gifts and send them home happier. I learned after several years of hosting events that there wasn't any long-term change in their lives as a result. Oh, the events we shared were great. The moms received some much-needed guidance and time to share with others like themselves. But they needed more.

I began to see that their real need was encouragement and support for the long haul and raising kids alone is a very long haul. They didn't need judgement, though many are quick to offer that. They needed mercy.

Now SMORE offers support to single moms in college and on their way to practical employment. We give them encouragement throughout their time as a student. It has been documented that college students who don't have a support system are seven

times less likely to finish and earn a college degree. The most valuable gift we can give a single mother is a way forward to personal independence. We give a large dose of mercy to our moms, regardless of how she came to be a single mother head of household.

It requires wise discernment to know when mercy ought to be applied rather than judgement.

The theme in *Les Misérables* of mercy versus judgement reminds us how precious is the decision to be merciful. The bishop shows mercy and doesn't accuse Jean Valjean who has attempted to steal the silver candlesticks from the bishop's home. So intriguing is this story that a musical, a movie and now a television series have been made from this classic novel by Victor Hugo. Maybe this is because in our desire to see justice we have forgotten the need for mercy.

It comes from the heart, especially a heart that is open to it. It is gentle and comes from a source outside our human nature. Showing mercy doesn't require great effort. It does require great wisdom.

In Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, Portia says, "The quality of mercy is not strained. It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath." Oh, to live in a world of gentle mercy.

I've always found that mercy bears richer fruits than strict justice. – Abraham Lincoln

Noble

Noble is an old-fashioned word you seldom hear anymore. I wonder if that is because there is no need for it because so few measure up. To be noble is to be of high moral principles. I'm thinking of all the famous people that have fallen short of the quality of noble in my lifetime. I don't have to list them; you know who they are. There are few who make the cut like – Nelson Mandela, Warren Buffett, Frances Collin, M.D., Elie Wiesel, Mother Teresa, and Oprah. To be considered noble one must live a life invested in the welfare of others. A noble person: is intentional, is never lazy, is a hard worker with a plan, is always caring for family, invests in their success, and inspires respect from others. Noble means doing what must be done whether or not it is pleasant. In 2020 we all lived in what seemed like an alternate universe with a worldwide pandemic. We've seen noble people come to the forefront. One group has been especially affected and has gotten some attention in the media - mothers. They have experienced the most significant daily life changes-except for the health care workers of course. Well, some of them *are* mothers too. Mothers deserve our applause more than ever.

71 % of mothers in the U.S. work outside the home. In early 2020 all of a sudden without warning their jobs became at-home jobs if they were fortunate to keep a job. Their preschoolers couldn't go to a childcare that was closed. Their children couldn't go to school and they were doing virtual online classes. Children did not simply sit down at a computer, if they had one, and fall in line with the new program. So, mothers became instructors as well. That is if she knew how it worked.

Mothers are resilient. Mothers adapt. We expect miracles from mothers. And in 2020 that is what we got. Working mothers at home juggling work-at-home jobs or no job, children learning online classes and no childcare. From Kavitha Cardoza, NPR:

One of the biggest challenges facing parents in the COVID-19 crisis is child care. Recent research says about 4 1/2 million child care spots in the country could be permanently lost because of the pandemic. And that has a huge ripple effect — without child care, it will be hard for so many parents to get back to work. Economists predict this will affect mostly women, who will have to leave the workforce to care for their children.

There were nearly 10 million mothers of young children in the labor force in 2019 according to a report between *The Century Foundation* and the *Center for American Progress*. This report also estimates that the risk of mothers leaving the labor force and reducing work hours in order to assume caretaking responsibilities amounts to \$64.5 billion per year in lost wages and economic activity.

According to Tim Henderson with *Stateline*, Mothers of children 12 years old and younger lost nearly 2.2 million jobs between February and August, a 12% drop, a *Stateline* analysis found. And The loss was even worse for single mothers of young children, who lost 16% of jobs they held in February last year.

Noble may be an old-fashioned word you seldom hear these days. And few measure up to its high standards. During the Covid-19 epidemic, mothers did measure up and they are, in my opinion, the new nobility.

I dedicate this to my daughters, daughters-in-law and single mothers of SMORE.

Open to other opinions

Wisdom is the reward you get for a lifetime of listening when you'd have preferred to talk.

— Doug Larson

The really wise person is open to hearing what others have to say. Instead of being rigid and opinionated, a wise person listens. Our world is filled to the brim with opinionated news.

Whether it is Fox or CNN, people with opinions are considered the experts of our day. Never mind whether or not they are qualified as a specialist on the subject. If you are not open-minded, you could easily be influenced by them.

To be open-minded means you listen to other people's arguments, even if you disagree with their views. Being open to the opinions of others also means recognizing people for the individuals they are and understanding that others are entitled to their views.

We all have opinions. We don't have to agree. However, when we listen and are open to the thoughts of others, we learn.

Consider a time when you were certain of something and in discussion with another person, you opened your mind to their opinion. If, instead of defending your opinion, you listened. Wouldn't it be nice if everyone did this?

In our government, the U.S. president has a Cabinet which is an advisory body made up of the vice president and the heads of the 15 executive departments. Members of the Cabinet are often the president's closest confidants. When a president chooses wisely,

his or her Cabinet will provide the president with their thoughts on matters of great importance to our country. A wise leader will listen.

Believe it or not, presidents and former presidents sometimes communicate with each other, for the good of our country. An example of a serving president and a former president's relationship is described by Nancy Gibbs, the author of "The President's Club."

"Herbert Hoover started the 'modern president's club.' Harry Truman suddenly finds himself in office in the spring of 1945, and he's facing this catastrophe in Europe as the war is ending and he secretly writes to Hoover, saying, 'Can you come help me figure out how we're going to get food to the countries that need it?' ... They have nothing in common, and yet they end up forming this partnership that you could say probably saved more lives than any two men in the 20th century, and worked very closely together throughout Truman's presidency."

Wouldn't it be nice if our leaders were open to solutions from others today?

In families, parents are leaders. Parents who listen to what their children have to say build a strong family unit. By giving the children a voice in matters, parents allow children to develop confidence as individuals. This is wise parenting. Wouldn't it be nice if all parents respected and listened to their children?

In all relationships, the two people would be wise to be open to the thoughts and opinions of the other. When one of the two takes over and insists that their way is the only way, the relationship suffers and may disintegrate. Wouldn't it be nice if all

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relationships were open to each other's thoughts? How can we better interact with those with whom we don't agree?

Here are some options from Monica A. Frank, Ph.D., for being an engaged listener:

"No, that can't be right" vs. "Really? Why is that?"

"I think that's wrong" vs. "What do you think?"

"That's stupid!" vs. "That's interesting — tell me more."

"No, you don't understand" vs. "Why do you think that?"

Elbert Hubbard, an American philosopher, gives us good reason why we should be receptive to the opinions of others. He wrote, "The recipe for perpetual ignorance is: be satisfied with your opinions and content with your knowledge."

Wouldn't it be nice we all at least listened to the opinions of others? Wisdom comes from being open to the points stated by others.

The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice.

— Proverbs 12:15

Perseverance

Think of all the people you know who didn't give up. We all know about Thomas Edison who had 9,000 failed attempts before he created the light bulb. There are many others like Nelson Mandela who demonstrated the power of perseverance Twenty-seven years in prison is testimony to that power when he won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993 for having led South Africa from apartheid to a multiracial democracy.

At one-point JK Rowling, the author of the Harry Potter series, was jobless, divorced, penniless, and had a dependent child. She suffered through bouts of depression, eventually signing up for government-assisted welfare.

Colonel Sanders of Kentucky Fried Chicken set out at the age of 62 with a \$105 social security check in hand to pitch his chicken recipe to restaurants. 1,009 folks told him he was crazy, but he didn't give up.

Walt Disney's first go at business landed in bankruptcy. We all know what happened eventually and aren't we glad?

Jim Carrey grew up in such poverty that he had to drop out of high school at the age of fifteen and get a job as a janitor just to help support the family.

Milton Hershey, the inventor of the chocolate bar and Hershey Kisses, never gave up and where would we be without those kisses?

And there are those you will never meet. I think of all the single mothers I know who keep on, keeping on. I recall the parents of numerous children with visual impairments that I worked with over a ten-year period who never, ever gave up doing what was best for their child.

When my mother was in her last few years, my sister began interviewing her about various things. Once she asked her what were the most outstanding traits of each of her four children. When it came to me, she said perseverance. I am honored today, but at the time I thought that wasn't a compliment. It didn't seem very flattering or glamorous. My nephew, Michael Baye, who holds a PhD and is the author of several textbooks on economics once told me, "You don't have to be smart to get a PhD, you just have to persevere."

I thought of that when I was working on finishing my Master's. I couldn't quite get my professor to accept the premise of my thesis. I had to keep revising and returning for his approval.

I'd worked hard and was determined to finish. One day I went in with a different demeanor. I had rewritten and reorganized the work, but the real difference was my attitude. I was sure of myself; I was determined and I had persevered. He approved my work. Not a PhD, but I was happy.

At the risk of you thinking I'm contradicting myself - a wise person also knows when to stop.

I'm not sure I know when to quit. I rather like keeping on, keeping on. And then there is this quote by Charles de Gaulle: "Genius sometimes consists of knowing when to stop." But then I've never been too fond of de Gaulle.

Questioning

The important thing is to never stop questioning. – Albert Einstein

Do you ask questions? The importance of asking questions eludes most of us. In conversation, we like to talk about ourselves without learning about the other person with questions like: What has been happening in their lives? What do they enjoy? What are they doing tomorrow? In his classic book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, Dale Carnegie said, “You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you.”

Not only do we make friends by asking questions, we learn by asking questions. The interaction of student and teacher increases success in the school classroom and in life’s classroom. We are accustomed to asking Google for the answers to questions that come up whether in our personal lives or at the dinner table. The answer is at our fingertips. Not so for all questions, though. Don’t expect Google to answer questions about your values, your plans or your thoughts. And what could be more important than your thoughts? That is a question to consider.

When we ask a question, we may feel that we are vulnerable. We are letting others know that we don’t know the answer. We could think that makes us appear weak or even stupid. The opposite is more likely. Asking a question lets others know that you are thinking, that you are willing to listen and consider what others know. Knowledge can be gained from questioning and listening.

When I was a classroom teacher, I appreciated students who were curious and brave enough to ask questions. They were the ones who were teachable. Throughout history

our great scientists were willing to ask questions. Every important scientific discovery was preceded by a question.

“ For example, James Watson and Francis Crick's proposal that DNA takes the form of a double helix helped answer a burning question in biology about the chemical structure of DNA. . . raised many new questions . . . and contributed to whole new fields of research (e.g., genetic engineering). Like Watson and Crick's work, most scientific research generates new expectations, inspires new questions, and leads to new discoveries.”

https://undsci.berkeley.edu/article/0_0_0/whatisscience_08

The United States congress holds hearings in which they gather information by asking questions. Questions are essential in the quest for truth. In the court of law, questions are asked and the person on the stand must answer truthfully or could be charged with perjury.

Questions are the heart of our lives, our government, our scientific community and healthy families.

Questions you could ask yourself that may change your life:

- What bad habits do I need to stop?
- Have I been the kind of person I want to be?
- What am I grateful for today?
- What makes my soul happy?
- How will this world be better when I am gone?

Asking questions leads to wisdom. What questions will you ask? That is a question worth considering.

Resilience

Have you ever wondered why one person, when faced with uncertainty and change, reacts so differently than another person? Resilience could explain it.

A simple definition of resilience is the ability to remain productive and positive when faced with stress, uncertainty and change. There is a slight difference between resilience and perseverance. Resilience is more mental and even emotional. While perseverance usually refers to continuing to take an action.

Erik Weißenmayer is the world's leading blind athlete and the only blind person in history to reach the Seven Summits, including Everest in 2001. In *the Adversity Advantage*, that he wrote along with Paul G. Stoltz, he says, "All worthy ascents begin with coming to grips with where you are, so you can move forward and up. . . Let adversity be the flame in which your strengths are forged." The tagline for his organization, *No Barriers*, is "What's within you is stronger than what's in your way." Eric has resilience.

Malala Yousafzai, a Pakistani activist for female education, was shot in the head on October 9, 2012, while on a bus after taking an exam, Yousafzai was shot by a Taliban gunman in an assassination attempt in retaliation for her activism; the gunman fled the scene. Yousafzai remained unconscious and in critical condition, but her condition later improved enough for her to be transferred to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham, UK. Even while in the hospital she said, "I believed in my strength. I believed I would get out of the hospital and run like a wolf, fly like an eagle." After her recovery she became a prominent activist for education and is the youngest

recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize for her advocacy of education. Malala demonstrated resilience.

Bill Wilson, the founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, was an alcoholic. In spite of the fact that he was on track for a brilliant Wall Street career, his life was in a downward spiral. In 1935 he met Dr. Bob and together they developed a plan that would eventually become AA. Today AA can be found in approximately 180 nations worldwide with membership estimated at over two million. There are more than 123,000 AA groups in the world. AA literature has been translated into over 100 languages. The famous 12 Steps were written in 1938. Wilson's resilience has saved an untold number of lives. Closer to home, you can find others with resilience overcoming life's disappointments, even tragedies. For ten of my twenty years as an educator, I worked with children who were blind. The year after I became her Braille teacher, Kim lost all of the little sight she had left. She was in the fourth grade and had experienced several eye surgeries in her short lifetime. At this point it became necessary for her to learn the Braille math code. Previously she was able to manage with enlargements. Now she was not. As I introduced the first math lesson, she struggled a little and I made comments like, "There is no rush" "You can take your time" and "Don't worry about catching on right away." To which she replied, "Don't worry. I can get this. I'm *young*." And she did. She now holds a Ph.D. from The University of Texas and works as a Health Equity Researcher for Mathematica Policy Research. Kim shows resilience in every area of her life and is an inspiration to others.

Wisdom is comprised of many traits and resilience is definitely one of them. However, resilience is made up of other traits like optimism and perseverance. Perhaps resilience

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is acquired and not a trait we are born with. I believe, however, a child develops resilience by coping with life's challenges early on.

Our world is made better when people express their resilience in positive and beneficial ways.

You can't go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending. - C.S. Lewis

Sincerity

Sincerity is so much more than simple honesty. Sincerity is the [virtue](#) of one who communicates and acts in accordance with the entirety of their feelings, beliefs, thoughts, and desires in a manner that is honest and genuine all the time.

True sincerity requires a sacrifice of self when you would rather dodge the truth of your own thoughts. I've known some with genuine sincerity, including my mother, who in spite of herself was exceptionally blunt. Sincerity isn't necessarily blunt though it does demand an honesty that few possess.

One famous figure comes to mind. Eleanor Roosevelt. It would have been so much easier for her to adopt the coy personality her mother preferred she exhibit. After all Eleanor was reminded of her "plainness" by her mother who called her "Granny" playing on Eleanor's serious demeanor.

No matter how plain a woman may be, if truth and honesty are written across her face, she will be beautiful. — Eleanor Roosevelt

Eleanor suffered from anxiety as a child. Her early life was difficult. Her marriage and the norms of her day did not encourage women to take a stand for their beliefs. Though it would have been easy to hide, she was true to herself, especially in her mid and later life.

- She remained steadfast as an advocate for human rights when it was unpopular.
- She exhibited sincerity as an independent woman. She had no reason to accept and support viewpoints that she wholeheartedly did not agree with.
- Despite FDR's protest, she continued to support anti-discrimination.
- Ultimately her leadership in writing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a document that would shape the way nations treated their citizens from that time forward and hold them responsible if they failed to adhere to its ideals, gave her a place in history.

Sincerity must be consistent. A wise person knows this. They know that whatever they say, even when the microphone is turned off, should be from an honest heart and ought to be in line with what they would say if the mic were on.

As we live with Russia continuing to destroy an entire country with no regard for human rights, Eleanor's speech to the United Nations in 1948 still should ring in our minds.

It is a Declaration of basic principles of human rights and freedoms and serves as a common standard of achievement for all peoples of all nations. Predictably the Soviet press was not impressed, calling Eleanor "a hypocritical servant of capitalism."

As Eleanor said, "Totalitarian governments like that of the Soviet Union, typically places the will of the people second to decrees promulgated by a few men at the top.

Democracies, on the other hand, are based on freedom which was not only a right but a tool . . .with which we create a way of life in which we can enjoy freedom."

Eleanor was anything but a hypocrite. She was a courageous woman exercising supreme sincerity.

Sincerity makes the very least person to be of more value than the most talented hypocrite.

- Charles Spurgeon

Tenderness

In 1966, the year I graduated from high school, Otis Redding came out with his version of "Try a Little Tenderness." That age-old song had an ageless message for men. A wise person, male or female, knows that tenderness is essential in a relationship as well as in leadership.

I recall a day in years past when I had a meltdown in front of my boss. Though his words had brought it on, his tenderness during my sobbing episode meant the world to me. Showing tenderness is not weak. On the contrary showing tenderness is a sign of real strength.

Nothing is so strong as gentleness. Nothing is so gentle as real strength.

-Frances De Sales

It is common to think of people like Mother Teresa when we think of tenderness. And of course, that fits. Or we may think of Jesus and his tenderness towards the thief on the cross.

Tenderness is demonstrated throughout the book of *Les Miserables*, the French historical novel by Victor Hugo, published in 1862 and later made into an award-winning musical.

In spite of these world renown examples of tenderness, violence against women, especially, remains a problem.

The United Nations defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life."

According to the World Health Organization (WHO):

- Violence against women – particularly intimate partner violence and sexual violence – is a major public health problem and a violation of women's human rights.

- Estimates published by WHO indicate that globally about 1 in 3 (30%) of women worldwide have been subjected to either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime.

The wise man knows that tenderness is a virtue. One such man is Patrick Stewart. Sir Patrick Stewart or you may know him as Captain Jean-Luc Picard in *Star Trek*, is a true example of unexpected tenderness. After growing up in a home where his father was violent towards his mother, Stewart is determined to do what he can to stop domestic violence. His statement, “The truth is that domestic violence and violence against women touch many of us. This violence is not a private matter. Behind closed doors it is shielded and hidden and it only intensifies. It is protected by silence – everyone's silence. Violence against women is learned. Each of us must examine - and change - the ways in which our own behavior might contribute to, enable, ignore or excuse all such forms of violence. I promise to do so, and to invite other men and allies to do the same.”

Ruthless and thoughtless animosity shows up everywhere these days from road rage to political unrest. Anger over differences of opinions boils over and becomes vicious. I'm sorry to say, it is often instigated by men. Tenderness has a maternal element. It doesn't have to. We can teach young boys to be better men by teaching and modeling this wise trait. We know tenderness when we see it in others and often miss the chance to demonstrate it ourselves. Imagine how our world would change if we stressed that showing tenderness is real strength. As the song says “Try a Little Tenderness.”

Our greatest strength lies in the gentleness and tenderness of our heart. – Rumi

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If you are in an abusive situation or know someone who is -
<https://westrengthenfamilies.org/#victimservices>

Universal Understanding

Universal includes all nations and all peoples. A wise person accepts that we are all part of the same human race. To be universally understanding one must accept other cultures, not demean them. One must appreciate the beauty in other viewpoints. This requires an open mind.

Dualistic thinking, on the other hand, is when you have an us and/or them mentality.

Uni means one as in universe, uniform, united. We as humans all have more in common than in contrast to one another.

Bi means two. As in the word bias. Bias is described in Webster's dictionary as "the prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair."

Understanding that we are all in this life, on this planet together is the beginning of accepting the universality of life.

Taking words from John Lennon, "Imagine all the people, Livin' life in peace." This is what universal understanding could bring. I believe this can only come through education and learning about other nations, other cultures and how they have come to be.

Traveling and being with people of other races and nationalities helps us to be more accepting and universal in our thinking.

Mark Twain said – "Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime."

I once worked as a consultant in an area of Houston where I was the only white person that I ever saw, for several square miles. I was hired to teach Braille to a twelve-year-old girl who had recently lost her sight due to meningitis. During the summer months we worked in her home. When school started, I went to her school. Razor wire made big loops above the eight-foot hurricane fence that surrounded the middle school. When I saw that, my implicit bias was triggered and yet after working there for weeks I came away with complete respect for the teachers and administrators with whom I worked.

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We treated each other with a level of courtesy and appreciation that I wish we saw everywhere. We were all there for the students. That is universal commitment.

In a poll from *The Atlantic* and the Aspen Institute when asked, what political leader best embodies unity in America historically, Abraham Lincoln won out with Ronald Reagan close behind. The irony is “Abraham Lincoln presided over the country at the apex of its division – the Civil War – but embodies unity in the sense of championing unity when it was most in doubt and succeeding in holding the United States together as one nation.”

Universal thinking encompasses all nations and all people, A person who has it is willing to see the whole picture, isn't narrow minded, understands and accepts other cultures, respects other schools of thought and appreciates beauty in other viewpoints.

“Imagine all the people, Livin' life in peace.”

Vision

I finished my professional career as a Braille teacher. Teaching a young child who is blind to read was definitely a highlight of my life. It was also a learning experience for me. My students did not have sight, but they had vision. Helen Keller said it best when she said, "The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision."

Believing that a goal can be accomplished requires vision. Wise people have vision.

Brooklyn Bridge

Everyone has a dream. Not everyone has vision. The story of the building of the Brooklyn Bridge demonstrates a challenging vision. The Brooklyn Bridge was conceived by German immigrant, John Augustus Roebling in 1852. The task seemed impossible. And it proved to be extremely difficult.

In June 1869, while conducting surveys, Roebling sustained an injury to his foot. After amputation of his crushed toes, he developed a tetanus infection that left him incapacitated and resulted in his death the following month. Washington Roebling, John Roebling's 32-year-old son, was then hired to fill his father's role. Washington Roebling himself suffered a paralyzing injury. His debilitating condition left him unable to supervise the construction in person, so he designed the caissons and other equipment from his apartment, directing "the completion of the bridge through a telescope from his bedroom." (Brooklyn Bridge, 2023) The Brooklyn Bridge was completed May 24, 1883. The bald eagle can see eight times as far as the sharpest human eye can and yet the eagle cannot visualize or design like a human can. And yet, humans will allow their eyesight to interfere with their vision. They tend to see the obstacles and too often this prevents them from achieving their goals.

Erik Weihenmayer

Erik Weihenmayer, is the world's leading blind athlete and the only blind person in history to reach the Seven Summits, including Everest. In his book *The Adversity Advantage*, he states, "Most people dramatically underestimate what can be influenced when adversity hits, and this underestimation kills the majority of what's possible. Conversely, becoming utterly obsessed with what you *can* influence opens worlds of possibilities that others simply don't see." Vision sees what really makes a difference. It overcomes. It achieves. It gets to the soul of the matter.

Real Vision

I had the privilege of teaching young Amanda, who is totally blind, to read. One of her Braille readers included the story of Stevie Wonder. The story told of his troubled childhood, how poor his family was and how prejudice affected his life. After she read the story Amanda asked, "What is prejudice?"

Hoping to keep it simple I told her, "Some people have light colored skin and some have very dark colored skin. Often the people with light skin are not nice to the people with dark skin."

She asked, "Why?"

"Some light-colored people think they are better." I was wondering what meaning this would have for her. She thought for a bit then asked, "What color is *my* skin?"

ABCs of Wisdom

Amanda graduated from The University of Texas with a degree in computer science and is now working on a PhD at Texas A&M where she is helping design software that will make STEM subjects accessible to blind graduate students. Amanda lives her vision.

Vision doesn't require eyesight. Having real vision is a quality of the wise.

Wisdom instills vision.

Waiting Well

We are just not good at waiting. For most Americans it's full steam ahead. Back in the day of my grandparents, waiting was a part of everyday life. Waiting for crops to grow, waiting for the rain, waiting for harvest, and waiting for merchandise to arrive in the stores – not online. Today we can wish for something, go online and it will appear on our doorstep momentarily, or almost. Even full course meals can be delivered, still warm. We've lost the ability to wait well. The food we eat comes from crops that others harvested. Most of us are so far detached from the farms we don't think about what it takes for our meals to make it to our table.

Mother Nature

Mother Nature still requires waiting. We can't force a tree to grow. Babies remain in the womb for nine months. The cycle of life continues and is sacred. We celebrate spring and the renewal of life every year. Birth brings with it hope and joy.

There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature — the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter. – Rachel Carson

In 2021 during Valentine's week we had historical snow, sleet and freezing temperatures that lasted for several days. There was a total of 8 days, 23 hours, and 23 minutes of winter highlights between the first Winter Weather Advisory issued on Thursday, February 11th at 9:37 am to when the last Hard Freeze Warning expired at 9 am on Saturday, February 20th. This is very unusual for southeast Texas. My lovely gardens went from vibrant to wilted, crushed and lifeless. I was devastated.

ABCs of Wisdom

People kept saying, don't worry the azaleas will come back. I waited. My border of variegated ginger plants was flattened as if they had been drenched with boiling water. I waited. The azaleas didn't come back. The ginger did. I learned that some plants can weather deep freeze and others simply cannot. I decided not to fight Mother Nature. I've planted freeze resistant plants.

Cycle of Life

Respect for the cycle of life is something with which we struggle. When our pet dies or when a grandparent dies, we may be ready. But if a death of a loved one is unexpected, we struggle, we grieve. It is a change we do not want.

My older sister who was sixteen when I was born, died in April 2023. A few days before her death, she said, "People don't need to live to be ninety-one years old."

I found her body when I went to take her some homemade seafood gumbo. When I couldn't wake her and I had to accept that she was no longer alive, I wept. Grief comes to us all and it is always uninvited. She was ready. I was not. I wish she could have waited a little longer.

Hope

We have our own ideas about waiting. Mostly we don't want to. We like to control events. We feel uncomfortable waiting. Waiting calls our attention to the passage of time and even to our own mortality.

We wait for what we hope will come to pass—a positive diagnosis, employment at a new job, college acceptance, a proposal of marriage and the birth of a healthy baby. Waiting well gives us time to relax, to think, to breathe. Waiting can be a good thing once we are wise enough to accept it as part of the cycle of life, even everyday life.

Waiting can be a test of character and perseverance, but it can also be an opportunity for growth and self-discovery. -unknown

Xiexie

Xiexie is “thank you” in Chinese.

Arigatō is “thank you” in Japanese.

Gracias is “thank you” in Spanish.

Grazie is “thank you” in Italian.

Merci is “thank you” in French.

Every language has a “thank you.”

“These words have the power to transform our health, happiness, performance, and success. Research tells us grateful people are happier and more likely to maintain good friendships. It reduces stress, improves our sleep, and floods our bodies with endorphins that energize us, instead of hormones that leave us feeling drained and depleted” says Jon Gordon.

Most “thank yous” are easy. Someone holds a door open for you – you say “thank you.” A friend gives you a gift – you say “thank you.” A clerk pays you a compliment- you say “thank you.”

From the least significant to the most serious of life’s circumstances, “thank you” is spoken and is sincere. It’s a phrase of appreciation and gratitude.

A life lesson, not to be lost, is a “thank you” that is specific means more than a quick or flippant “thank you.” Sometimes in our lives we fail to say a significant “thank you” that could bring joy as in the lyrics of Parker

McCullom's song to his mother, "Things I Never Told You." He sings:

"Thank you is at the top of my list of things I never told you."

Some circumstances make saying "thank you" almost impossible. The hardest "thank you" of all is thanking someone who taught you a life lesson you didn't want to learn, one that caused you grief or great pain but forced you to make a life altering decision or change. Even though I am a grateful person, it took me many years to succeed with this one.

Adversity can be your source of strength and can offer "the greatest potential or breakthrough in your life," as Paul G. Stoltz states in *The Adversity Advantage*. When you face this challenge and are able to say, "thank you" you will experience the freedom of thankfulness.

Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved. – Helen Keller

How do you say "thank you" to someone who caused you hurt? It may take time to see how the pain led you to making a needed change in your life.

You may not be able to forgive the person who hurt you and that's understandable. They left wounds. They also left you a different person and, in many cases, a much stronger, resilient and better person. You learned life lessons that you might not have learned any other way.

Through this experience you gained wisdom. Saying “thank you” for the event, even just from within your soul, will make you a wiser person.

Thanks to those who left, you showed me that not everything is forever.

Thanks to those who entered my life, you helped me become the person

I am today. - Unknown

A wise person says “thank you” in whatever language, and their soul is strengthened.

Yielding

YIELD is a common road sign. In Europe the street sign says “Give Way.” Yielding is a kind of giving. It’s not the same as *giving-in*. Just as the soil yields a crop that provides food for us all, by yielding we do a good thing. Yielding is not a sign of weakness; It is a sign that you must allow others the right of way. Listening in communication involves yielding. By listening you surrender your position, at least temporarily. A wise person listens to all sides of an argument. A wise person knows when it is best to yield.

Eckart Tolle puts it like this,

“To some people, surrender may have negative connotations, implying defeat, giving up, failing to rise to the challenges of life, becoming lethargic, and so on.

True surrender, however, is something entirely different. It does not mean to passively put up with whatever situation you find yourself in and to do nothing about it. Nor does it mean to cease making plans or initiating positive action.

Surrender is the simple but profound wisdom of yielding to rather than opposing the flow of life. The only place where you can experience the flow of life is the Now, so to surrender is to accept the present moment unconditionally and without reservation.”

Partaking in a debate can be a mind-broadening activity. One of the reasons that participating in a debate is so valuable is that you have to prepare your arguments for *both* sides of the issue. At least this is the case in UIL school competition. In preparing you must take a serious look at opposing positions.

ABCs of Wisdom

Personal arguments can be learning experiences. Have you ever noticed what happens in a disagreement when you say, “You may be right?” First, the wise person listens, really listens. And by hearing both sides you can then make an informed decision. We have a bumper sticker that reads, “Be informed, not just opinionated.”

Don’t you wish our congress would try this? Our country is extremely divided and I can’t help but think it’s because no one wants to compromise. It’s as though they think they would be giving in if they yielded to another’s view point, even a little.

I’m with Barbara Bush, the wife of former President George H.W. Bush, who said “They (congress) are going to have to compromise, it’s not a dirty word.”

A legislator who has been recognized to speak yields the floor when he or she completes his or her remarks and terminates his or her recognition.

They know how to yield the floor but so few ever yield when it comes to a controversial opinion.

Yield to him who opposes you; by yielding you conquer.

— Ovid (43BC - 17AD)

Zealous

It is appropriate to finish my ABCs of Wisdom with Zealous. Wisdom with zeal means you have contributed to the world with enthusiasm and vigor. You have a passion for a cause that is dear to you.

Zeal will do more than knowledge. - William Hazlitt

When I taught high school, I saw some students who made straight A's. They had loads of knowledge, but no zeal. There was no enthusiasm. They had no passion for anything. Making the grade came easy but a personal interest was lacking. Students with a lower grade point average, but with zeal came much nearer achieving something worthwhile in the world.

Many people who left a mark were zealous. People like Martin Luther King, Jr., our Founding Fathers, Shakespeare, Michelangelo, Leonardo DaVinci, and Thomas Edison. More recently Bono, Matthew McConaughey, and Dolly Parton.

Paul David Hewson known as Bono was chosen by the Nobel Peace Laureates for his long-lasting engagement in the campaign for debt cancellation in third world countries. Bono is an Irish singer-songwriter, activist, and philanthropist. He and his main philanthropic partner Bobby Shriver created (RED) to raise money for the United Nations Foundation's Global Fund to Fight AIDS. (RED) partners with the world's most iconic brands and people to create products and experiences that fight AIDS and the injustices that enable pandemics to thrive.

Bono has become one of the world's best-known philanthropic performers and was named the most politically effective celebrity of all time by the [*National Journal*](#). He has been dubbed "the face of fusion philanthropy." He has enlisted diverse leaders in government and religious institutions and business for humanitarian relief.

Matthew McConaughey, an Academy Award winning actor, says he knew when he was eight years old that he wanted to be a dad when he grew up. He and his wife, Camilla,

have three children and he is zealous about fatherhood. He spoke at the White House in the aftermath of the Robb Elementary School shooting in Uvalde, the town where he was born. He is passionate about supporting common-sense gun laws. His Greenlights Grant Initiative even provides grant writers for some of the highest-risk schools, significantly increasing their chances of obtaining federal funding. From urban areas to rural school districts, the program aims to ensure every child has access to a safe and supportive learning environment.

Dolly Parton is very famous for her numerous country and bluegrass hits, not to mention many awards. She manages businesses and is also an actress. Her philanthropy is significant. Parton's education-based activism morphed into her Imagination Library, an organization responsible for distributing free books to kids across the country. Today, Parton & Co. ship more than a million books to 1.3 million kids each month. I would say she is zealous about educating children in impoverished areas.

We sometimes associate zeal with misguided Christian missionaries. Be careful here. Their zeal may be their motivation, but is it wise? Is it true? Truth is always paramount.

They have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge (Rom 10:2).

All the sincerity and passion in the world are not enough if we are not fueled by the truth.

- David Burnette

A zealous person who acts rationally and in truth demonstrates wisdom.

Epilogue

I began writing these editorials in 2019 and was pleased to have the Beaumont Enterprise publish them. I give my parents credit for everything I have learned while growing up about wisdom in my life. After my upbringing I have to credit life experiences. I treat life as a journey, not a destination. Each experience offers a lesson. I can receive it as such or not. If I don't, chances are, I will cause myself more pain than I would otherwise experience. I've done it both ways. Life can be a demanding teacher. She demands our attention and offers up retakes if we don't get it the first time around. My hope is that this book will be read by my grandchildren as they face life's hurdles. I have fifteen grandchildren and each one is precious. Some know me better than others. A few have lived with us and others live across the pond and we seldom see each other. Our family is somewhat complicated and we love them all. My heart goes out to all who read this and I genuinely offer it as a gift. From my life to yours,

Gail

Nana

Oma