

ABC's of Wisdom P- 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.

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