

Motivational Stories

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Below are stories that I have received through emails or taken from books I have read which have made an impact on me. I would like to share these stories with you and hope they inspire you too.

Thank you my friends who have sent me these motivational stories and thanks to all the motivational authors whose books have made a difference to my life.

-Ainsley Clarke

The Cracked Pot

A water bearer in India had two large pots, each hung on the end of a pole which he carried across his neck. One of the pots was perfectly made and never leaked. The other pot had a crack in it and by the time the water bearer reached his master's house it had leaked much of its water and was only half full.

For a full two years this went on daily, with the bearer delivering only one and a half pots full of water to his master's house. Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments. But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection, and miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do.

After two years of what it perceived to be a bitter failure, it spoke to the water bearer one day by the stream. "I am ashamed of myself, and I want to apologize to you." "Why?" asked the bearer. "What are you ashamed of?" "I have been able, for these past two years, to deliver only half my load because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your master's house. Because of my flaws, you have to do all of this work, and you don't get full value from your efforts," the pot said.

The water bearer felt sorry for the old cracked pot, and in his compassion he said, "As we return to the master's house, I want you to notice the beautiful flowers along the path."

Indeed, as they went up the hill, the old cracked pot took notice of the sun warming the beautiful wild flowers on the side of the path, and this cheered it some. But at the end of the trail, it still felt bad because it had leaked out half its load, and so again the pot apologized to the bearer for its failure.

The bearer said to the pot, "Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of your path, but not on the other pot's side? That's because I have always known about your flaw, and I took advantage of it. I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back from the stream, you've watered them. For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate my master's table. Without you being just the way you are, he would not have this beauty to grace his house."

Each of us has our own unique flaws. We're all cracked pots. But if we will allow it, God will use our flaws to grace his table. In God's great economy, nothing goes to waste. Don't be afraid of your flaws. Acknowledge them, and you too can be the cause of beauty. Know that in our weakness we find our strength.

The Mountain Story

A son and his father were walking on the mountains. Suddenly, his son falls, hurts himself and screams: "AAAhhhhhhhhhhh!!!"

To his surprise, he hears the voice repeating, somewhere in the mountain:

"AAAhhhhhhhhhhh!!!"

Curious, he yells: "Who are you?"

He receives the answer: "Who are you?"

Angered at the response, he screams: "Coward!"

He receives the answer: "Coward!"

He looks to his father and asks: "What's going on?"

The father smiles and says: "My son, pay attention."

And then he screams to the mountain: "I admire you!"

The voice answers: "I admire you!"

Again the man screams: "You are a champion!"

The voice answers: "You are a champion!"

The boy is surprised, but does not understand.

Then the father explains: "People call this ECHO, but really this is LIFE. It gives you back everything you say or do. Our life is simply a reflection of our actions. If you want more love in the world, create more love in your heart.

If you want more competence in your team, improve your competence. This relationship applies to everything, in all aspects of life; Life will give you back everything you have given to it."

YOUR LIFE IS NOT A COINCIDENCE. IT'S A REFLECTION OF YOU!

-Author Unknown

My Resignation

I am hereby officially tendering my resignation as an adult. I have decided I would like to accept the responsibilities of an 8 year-old.

I want to go to McDonald's and think that it's a four star restaurant. I want to sail sticks across a fresh mud puddle and make a sidewalk with rocks.

I want to think M&Ms are better than money because you can eat them. I want to lie under a big oak tree and run a lemonade stand with my friends on a hot summer's day.

I want to return to a time when life was simple; When all you knew were colors, multiplication tables, and nursery rhymes, but that didn't bother you, because you didn't know what you didn't know and you didn't care.

All you knew was to be happy because you were blissfully unaware of all the things that should make you worried or upset. I want to think the world is fair. That everyone is honest and good.

I want to believe that anything is possible. I want to be oblivious to the complexities of life and be overly excited by the little things again. I want to live simple again. I don't want my day to consist of computer crashes, mountains of paperwork, depressing news, how to survive more days in the month than there is money in the bank, doctor bills, gossip, illness, and loss of loved ones.

I want to believe in the power of smiles, hugs, a kind word, truth, justice, peace, dreams, the imagination, mankind, and making angels in the snow. So... here's my checkbook and my car-keys, my credit card bills and my 401K statements. I am officially resigning from adulthood.

And if you want to discuss this further, you'll have to catch me first, cause..... .."Tag! You're it."

- *Author Unknown*

See God

One day a 6 year old girl was sitting in a classroom. The teacher was going to explain evolution to the children. The teacher asked a little boy:

TEACHER: Tommy do you see the tree outside?

TOMMY: Yes

TEACHER: Do you see the grass outside?

TOMMY: Yes.

TEACHER: Go outside and look up and see if you can see the sky.

TOMMY: Okay. (He returned a few minutes later) Yes, I saw the sky.

TEACHER: Did you see God?

TOMMY: No.

TEACHER: That's my point. We can't see God because He isn't there. He doesn't exist.

A little girl spoke up and wanted to ask the boy some questions. The teacher agreed and the little girl asked the boy:

LITTLE GIRL: Tommy, do you see the tree outside?

TOMMY: Yes.

LITTLE GIRL: Tommy do you see the grass outside?

TOMMY: Yessssss (getting tired of the questions by this time).

LITTLE GIRL: Did you see the sky?

TOMMY: Yessssss

LITTLE GIRL: Do you see the teacher?

TOMMY: Yes

LITTLE GIRL: Do you see her brain?

TOMMY: No

LITTLE GIRL: Then according to what we were taught today in school she must not have one

"FOR WE WALK BY FAITH, NOT BY SIGHT"

- Author Unknown



Happiness is the Way

We convince ourselves that life will be better after we get married, have a baby, then another. Then we are frustrated that the kids aren't old enough and we'll be more content when they are. After that we're frustrated that we have teenagers to deal with. We will certainly be happy when they are out of that stage. We tell ourselves that our life will be complete when our spouse gets his or her act together, when we get a nicer car, are able to go on a nice vacation, when we retire.

The truth is, there's no better time to be happy than right now.

If not now, when?

Your life will always be filled with challenges. It's best to admit this to yourself and decide to be happy anyway. One of my favorite quotes comes from Alfred D Souza. He said: "For a long time it had seemed to me that life was about to begin - real life. But there was always some obstacle in the way, something to be gotten through first, some unfinished business, time still to be served, a debt to be paid. Then life would begin. At last it dawned on me that these obstacles were my life".

This perspective has helped me to see that there is no way to happiness. Happiness is the way.

So, treasure every moment that you have. And treasure it more because you shared it with someone special, special enough to spend your time and remember that time waits for no one.

So stop waiting until you finish school, until you go back to school, until you lose ten pounds, until you gain ten pounds, until you have kids, until your kids leave the house, until you start work, until you retire, until you get married, until you get divorced, until Friday night, until Sunday morning, until you get a new car or home, until home is paid off, until spring, until summer, until fall, until winter, until you are off welfare, until the first or fifteenth, until your song comes on, until you've had a drink, until you've sobered up, until you die, until you are born again to decide that there is no better time than right now to be happy.

Happiness is a journey, not a destination. Work like you don't need money, Love like you've never been hurt, And dance like no one's watching.

- Author Unknown

Some Money For Daddy

The man came home from work late again, tired and irritated, to find his 5 year old son waiting for him at the door.

"Daddy, may I ask you a question?"

"Yeah sure son, what is it?" replied the man.

"Daddy, how much money do you make an hour?"

"That's none of your business! What makes you ask such a thing?" the man said angrily. "I just want to know. Please tell me, how much do you make an hour?" pleaded the little boy.

"If you must know, I make \$20.00 an hour."

"Oh," the little boy replied, head bowed. Looking up, he said, "Daddy, may I borrow \$10.00 please?"

The father was furious. "If the only reason you wanted to know how much money I make is just so you can borrow some to buy a silly toy or some other nonsense, then you march yourself straight to your room and go to bed. Think about why you're being so selfish. I work long, hard hours everyday and don't have time for such childish games."

The little boy quietly went to his room and shut the door.

The man sat down and started to get even madder about the little boy's questioning. 'How dare him ask such questions only to get some money!' After an hour or so, the man had calmed down, and started to think he may have been a little hard on his son. Maybe there was something he really needed to buy with that \$10.00, and he really didn't ask for money very often. The man went to the door of the little boy's room and opened the door.

"Are you asleep son?" he asked.

"No daddy, I'm awake," replied the boy.

"I've been thinking," he said to his son. "Maybe I was too hard on you earlier. It's been a long day and I took my aggravation out on you. Here's that \$10.00 you asked for."

The little boy sat straight up, beaming. "Oh, thank you Daddy!" he yelled.

Then, reaching under his pillow, he pulled out some more crumpled up bills. The little boy slowly counted out his money, then looked up at the man. The man, seeing that the boy already had money, "Why did you want more money if you already had some?" the father asked.

"Because I didn't have enough yet," he said, "but now I do."

"Daddy, I have \$20.00 now. Can I buy an hour of your time?"

- *Author Unknown*

The Chicken

Once upon a time, there was a large mountainside, where an eagle's nest rested. The eagle's nest contained four large eagle eggs. One day an earthquake rocked the mountain causing one of the eggs to roll down the mountain, to a chicken farm, located in the valley below. The chickens knew that they must protect and care for the eagle's egg, so an old hen volunteered to nurture and raise the large egg.

One day, the egg hatched and a beautiful eagle was born. Sadly, however, the eagle was raised to be a chicken. Soon, the eagle believed he was nothing more than a chicken. The eagle loved his home and family, but his spirit cried out for more. While playing a game on the farm one day, the eagle looked to the skies above and noticed a group of mighty eagles soaring in the skies. "Oh," the Eagle cried, "I wish I could soar like those birds."

The chickens roared with laughter, "You cannot soar with those birds. You are a chicken and chickens do not soar." The eagle continued staring, at his real family up above, dreaming that he could be with them. Each time the eagle would let his dreams be known, he was told it couldn't be done.

That is what the eagle learned to believe. The eagle, after time, stopped dreaming and continued to live his life like a chicken. Finally, after a long life as a chicken, the eagle passed away.

The moral of the story: You become what you believe you are; so if you ever dream to become an eagle follow your dreams, not the words of a chicken.

- *Author Unknown*

Perspectives

One day a father and his rich family took his young son on a trip to the country with the firm purpose to show him how poor people can be. They spent a day and a night in the farm of a very poor family. When they got back from their trip the father asked his son, "How was the trip?"

Very good, Dad!"

"Did you see how poor people can be?" the father asked.

"Yeah!" "And what did you learn?"

The son answered, "I saw that we have a dog at home, and they have four. We have a pool that reaches to the middle of the garden, they have a creek that has no end. We have imported lamps in the garden, they have the stars. Our patio reaches to the front yard, they have a whole horizon.

When the little boy was finishing, his father was speechless.

His son added, "Thanks, Dad, for showing me how poor we are!" Isn't it true that it all depends on the way you look at things? If you have love, friends, family, health, good humor and a positive attitude toward life, you've got everything!

You can't buy any of these things. You can have all the material possessions you can imagine, provisions for the future, etc., but if you are poor of spirit, you have nothing!

- *Author Unknown*

The Mexican Fisherman

The American investment banker was at the pier of a small coastal Mexican village when a small boat with just one fisherman docked.

Inside the small boat were several large yellow fin tuna. The American complimented the Mexican on the quality of his fish and asked how long it took to catch them.

The Mexican replied, "Only a little while."

The American then asked, "Why didn't you stay out longer and catch more fish?"

The Mexican said, "With this I have more than enough to support my family's needs."

The American then asked, "But what do you do with the rest of your time?"

The Mexican fisherman said, "I sleep late, fish a little, play with my children, take siesta with my wife, Maria, stroll into the village each evening where I sip wine and play guitar with my amigos, I have a full and busy life."

The American scoffed, "I am a Harvard MBA and could help you. You should spend more time fishing; and with the proceeds, buy a bigger boat: With the proceeds from the bigger boat you could buy several boats. Eventually you would have a fleet of fishing boats. Instead of selling your catch to a middleman you would sell directly to the processor; eventually opening your own cannery. You would control the product, processing and distribution.

You would need to leave this small coastal fishing village and move to Mexico City, then Los Angeles and eventually New York where you will run your ever-expanding enterprise."

The Mexican fisherman asked, "But, how long will this all take?"

To which the American replied, "15 to 20 years."

"But what then?" asked the Mexican.

The American laughed and said that's the best part. "When the time is right you would announce an IPO and sell your company stock to the public and become very rich, you would make millions."

"Millions?...Then what?"

The American said, "Then you would retire. Move to a small coastal fishing village where you would sleep late, fish a little, play with your kids, take siesta with your wife, stroll to the village in the evenings where you could sip wine and play your guitar with your amigos."

- Author Unknown

The Wolves Within

An old Grandfather, whose grandson came to him with anger at a schoolmate who had done him an injustice, said, "Let me tell you a story. I too, at times, have felt a great hate for those that have taken so much, with no sorrow for what they do. But hate wears you down, and does not hurt your enemy. It is like taking poison and wishing your enemy would die. I have struggled with these feelings many times."

He continued, "It is as if there are two wolves inside me; one is good and does no harm. He lives in harmony with all around him and does not take offense when no offense was intended. He will only fight when it is right to do so, and in the right way."

"But the other wolf, ah! He is full of anger. The slightest thing will set him into a fit of temper. He fights everyone, all the time, for no reason. He cannot think because his anger and hate are so great. It is hard to live with these two wolves inside me, for both of them try to dominate my spirit."

The boy looked intently into his Grandfather's eye and asked, "Which one wins, Grandfather?"

The Grandfather solemnly said, "The one I feed."

-Author Unknown

The Touchstone

When the great library of Alexandria burned, the story goes, one book was saved. But it was not a valuable book; and so a poor man, who could read a little, bought it for a few coppers. The book wasn't very interesting, but between its pages there was something very interesting indeed.

It was a thin strip of vellum on which was written the secret of the "Touchstone"! The touchstone was a small pebble that could turn any common metal into pure gold. The writing explained that it was lying among thousands and thousands of other pebbles that looked exactly like it. But the secret was this: The real stone would feel warm, while ordinary pebbles are cold. So the man sold his few belongings, bought some simple supplies, camped on the seashore, and began testing pebbles.

He knew that if he picked up ordinary pebbles and threw them down again because they were cold, he might pick up the same pebble hundreds of times. So, when he felt one that was cold, he threw it into the sea. He spent a whole day doing this but none of them was the touchstone. Yet he went on and on this way. Pick up a pebble. Cold - throw it into the sea. Pick up another. Throw it into the sea.

The days stretched into weeks and the weeks into months. One day, however, about midafternoon, he picked up a pebble and it was warm. He threw it into the sea before he realized what he had done. He had formed such a strong habit of throwing each pebble into the sea that when the one he wanted came along, he still threw it away. So it is with opportunity. Unless we are vigilant, it's easy to fail to recognize an opportunity when it is in hand and it's just as easy to throw it away.

-Author Unknown

Looking Through A Child's Eyes

When I look at a patch of dandelions, I see a bunch of weeds that are going to take over my yard. My kids see flowers for Mom and blowing white fluff you can wish on.

When I look at an old drunk and he smiles at me, I see a smelly, dirty person who probably wants money and I look away. My kids see someone smiling at them and they smile back.

When I hear music I love, I know I can't carry a tune and don't have much rhythm so I sit self-consciously and listen. My kids feel the beat and move to it. They sing out the words. If they don't know them, they make up their own.

When I feel wind on my face, I brace myself against it. I feel it messing up my hair and pulling me back when I walk. My kids close their eyes, spread their arms and fly with it, until they fall to the ground laughing.

When I pray I say thee and thou and grant me this, give me that. My kids say, "Hi God!!! Please keep the bad dreams away tonight. I would miss my Mommy and Daddy."

When I see a mud puddle I step around it. I see muddy shoes and clothes, and dirty carpets. My kids sit in it. They see dams to build, rivers to cross and worms to play with.

I wonder if we are given kids to teach, or to learn from?

-Author Unknown

Life Lesson

Sometimes people come into your life and you know right away that they were meant to be there...to serve some sort of purpose, teach you a lesson or help figure out who you are or who you want to become.

You never know who these people may be but, when you lock eyes with them, you know that every moment they will affect your life in some profound way.

And sometimes things happen to you at the time that may seem horrible, painful and unfair but, upon reflection, you realize that without overcoming those obstacles you would have never realized your potential, strength, will power or heart.

Everything happens for a reason. Nothing happens by chance or by means of good luck. Illness, Injury, love, lost moments of true greatness and sheer stupidity all occur to test the limits of your soul.

Without these small tests, life would be like a smoothly paved, straight, flat road to nowhere. Safe and comfortable but dull and utterly pointless. The people you meet affect your life. The successes and downfalls that you experience can create who you are, and the bad experiences can be learned from. In fact, they are probably the most poignant and important ones.

If someone hurts you, betrays you or breaks your heart, forgive them because they have helped you learn about trust and the importance of being cautious to whom you open your heart to. If someone loves you, love them back, unconditionally, not only because they love you, but because they are teaching you to love and open your heart and eyes to little things.

Make every day count. Appreciate every moment and take from it everything that you possibly can, for you may never be able to experience it again. Talk to people you have never talked to before, and actually listen. Let yourself fall in love, break free and set your sights high.

Hold your head up because you have every right to. Tell yourself you are a great individual and believe in yourself, for if you don't believe in yourself, no one else will believe in you.

Symptoms of Inner Peace

A tendency to think and act spontaneously rather than from fears based on past experiences.

- An unmistakable ability to enjoy each moment.
- A loss of interest in judging self.
- A loss of interest in judging others.
- A loss in interest in conflict.
- A loss of interest in interpreting the action of others.
A loss of the ability to worry. (This symptom is very serious.)
Frequent overwhelming episodes of appreciation.
- Contented feelings of connectedness with others and nature.
Frequent attacks of smiling through the eyes of the Heart.
- Increasing susceptibility to love extended by others and the uncomfortable urge to extend it.
- An increasing tendency to let things happen rather than make them happen.

If you have all or most of the above symptoms, please be advised that your condition of PEACE may be so far advanced as to not be treatable.

Something To Think About

The paradox of our time in history is that we have taller buildings, but shorter tempers; wider freeways, but narrower viewpoints; we spend more, but have less; we buy more, but enjoy it less.

We have bigger houses and smaller families; more conveniences, but less time; we have more degrees, but less sense; more knowledge, but less judgment; more experts, but more problems; more medicine, but less wellness.

We drink too much, smoke too much, spend too recklessly, laugh too little, drive too fast, get too angry too quickly, stay up too late, get up too tired, read too seldom, watch TV too much, and pray too seldom.

We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values. We talk too much, love too seldom, and hate too often. We've learned how to make a living, but not a life; We've added years to life, not life to years.

We've been all the way to the moon and back, but have trouble crossing the street to meet the new neighbor. We've conquered outer space, but not inner space; We've done larger things, but not better things; We've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul; we've split the atom, but not our prejudice; we write more, but learn less; we plan more, but accomplish less. We've learned to rush, but not to wait; We have higher incomes, but lower morals; We have more food, but less appeasement; We build more computers to hold more information to produce more copies than ever, but have less communication; We've become long on quantity, but short on quality.

These are the times of fast foods and slow digestion; tall men, and short character; steep profits, and shallow relationships. These are the times of world peace, but domestic warfare; more leisure, but less fun; more kinds of food, but less nutrition.

These are days of two incomes, but more divorce; of fancier houses, but broken homes. These are days of quick trips, disposable diapers, throw away morality, one-night stands, overweight bodies, and pills that do everything from cheer to quiet, to kill.

It is a time when there is much in the show window and nothing in the stockroom; a time when technology can bring this letter to you, and a time when you can choose either to make a difference, or just turn the page...

-Author Unknown

The Best Day of My Life

Today, when I awoke, I suddenly realized that this is the best day of my life, ever!

There were times when I wondered if I would make it to today; but I did! And because I did I'm going to celebrate! Today, I'm going to celebrate what an unbelievable life I have had so far: the accomplishments, the many blessings, and, yes, even the hardships because they have served to make me stronger.

I will go through this day with my head held high, and a happy heart. I will marvel at God's seemingly simple gifts: the morning dew, the sun, the clouds, the trees, the flowers, the birds.

Today, none of these miraculous creations will escape my notice. Today, I will share my excitement for life with other people. I'll make someone smile. I'll go out of my way to perform an unexpected act of kindness for someone I don't even know. Today, I'll give a sincere compliment to someone who seems down. I'll tell a child how special he is, and I'll tell someone I love just how deeply I care for her and how much she means to me.

Today is the day I quit worrying about what I don't have and start being grateful for all the wonderful things God has already given me. I'll remember that to worry is just a waste of time because my faith in God and his Divine Plan ensures everything will be just fine. And tonight, before I go to bed, I'll go outside and Praise my eyes to the heavens. I

will stand in awe at the beauty of the stars and the moon, and I will praise God for these magnificent treasures.

As the day ends and I lay my head down on my pillow, I will thank the Almighty for the best day of my life. And I will sleep the sleep of a contented child, excited with expectation because I know tomorrow is going to be the best day of my life, ever!

-Author Unknown

The Real Meaning of Peace

There once was a king who offered a prize to the artist who would paint the best picture of peace. Many artists tried. The king looked at all the pictures. But there were only two he really liked, and he had to choose between them.

One picture was of a calm lake. The lake was a perfect mirror for peaceful towering mountains all around it. Overhead was a blue sky with fluffy white clouds. All who saw this picture thought that it was a perfect picture of peace.

The other picture had mountains, too. But these were rugged and bare. Above was an angry sky, from which rain fell and in which lightning played. Down the side of the mountain tumbled a foaming waterfall. This did not look peaceful at all.

But when the king looked closely, he saw behind the waterfall a tiny bush growing in a crack in the rock. In the bush a mother bird had built her nest. There, in the midst of the rush of angry water, sat the mother bird on her nest - in perfect peace.

Which picture do you think won the prize? The king chose the second picture. Do you know why?

"Because," explained the king, "peace does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble, or hard work. Peace means to be in the midst of all those things and still be calm in your heart. That is the real meaning of peace."

-Author Unknown

Two Days

There are two days in every week about which we should not worry, two days which should be kept free from fear and apprehension. One of these days is Yesterday with all its mistakes and cares, its faults and blunders, its aches and pains.

Yesterday has passed forever beyond our control. All the money in the world cannot bring back Yesterday. We cannot undo a single act we performed; we cannot erase a single word we said. Yesterday is gone forever.

The other day we should not worry about is Tomorrow, with all its possible adversities, its burdens, its large promise and its poor performance; Tomorrow is also beyond our immediate control.

Tomorrow's sun will rise, either in splendor or behind a mask of clouds, but it will rise. Until it does, we have no stake in Tomorrow, for it is yet to be born. This leaves only one day, Today. Any person can fight the battle of just one day. It is when you and I add the burdens of those two awful eternities, Yesterday and Tomorrow, that we break down.

It is not the experience of Today that drives a person mad, it is the remorse or bitterness of something which happened Yesterday and the dread of what Tomorrow may bring.

Let us, therefore, Live but one day at a time.

Yesterday is History,
Tomorrow is a Mystery and
Today is a gift: that's why we call it The Present.

- Author Unknown

Twenty Dollars

A well known speaker started off his seminar by holding up a \$20 bill. In the room of 200, he asked. "Who would like this \$20 bill?" Hands started going up. He said, "I am going to give this \$20 to one of you - but first, let me do this."

He proceeded to crumple the 20 dollar note up. He then asked. "Who still wants it?" Still the hands were up in the air. "Well," he replied, "what if I do this?" He dropped it on the ground and started to grind it into the floor with his shoe. He picked it up, now crumpled and dirty. "Now, who still wants it?"

Still the hands went into the air.

"My friends, you have all learned a very valuable lesson. No matter what I did to the money, you still wanted it because it did not decrease in value. It was still worth \$20. Many times in our lives, we are dropped, crumpled, and ground into the dirt by the decisions we make and the circumstances that come our way. We feel as though we are worthless; but no matter what happened or what will happen, you will never lose your value.

Dirty or clean, crumpled or finely creased, you are still priceless to those who love you. The worth of our lives comes, not in what we do or who we know, but by ...WHO WE ARE.

You are special - don't ever forget it."

-Author Unknown

Marriage Is A Promise Of Love

Marriage is a commitment to life -- to the best that two people can find and bring out in each other. It offers opportunities for sharing and growth no other human relationship can equal, a physical and emotional joining that is promised for a lifetime.

Within the circle of its love, marriage encompasses all of life's most important relationships. A wife and a husband are each other's best friend, confidant, lover, teacher, listener, and critic.

There may come times when one partner is heartbroken or ailing, and the love of the other may resemble the tender caring of a parent for a child. Marriage deepens and enriches every facet of life. Happiness is fuller; memories are fresher; commitment is stronger; even anger is felt more strongly, and passes away more quickly.

Marriage understands and forgives the mistakes life is unable to avoid. It encourages and nurtures new life, new experiences, and new ways of expressing love through the seasons of life.

When 2 people pledge to love and care for each other in marriage, they create a spirit unique to themselves, which binds them closer than any spoken or written words.

Marriage is a promise, a potential, made in the hearts of 2 people who love, while takes a lifetime to fulfill.

- Edmund O'Neill

The Price of Freedom

Have you ever been tempted to cut a corner or to take the easiest route, though you know it may not necessarily be the best one? Or have you ever made a decision because it was quick and simple, knowing that it might come back to bite you later?

I appreciate a parable Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard told about the dangers of taking the easy route. It is a story about a wild duck. Though life was difficult at times, the beautiful creature loved the boundless heavens and the endless stretches of wilderness. Soaring about treetops and towns, the duck symbolized to its tame counterparts, who could not fly, the epitome of freedom.

One evening during fall migration, he chanced to light in a barnyard where a farmer was feeding his ducks. The beautiful creature ate the corn the farmer sprinkled about and liked it so much that he stayed the night in a bed of warm straw. He ate the duck's corn again the next day. And the next. And the next....

When spring came, he heard his old companions flying overhead and an almost forgotten yearning awoke deep within him. The duck had all but squelched his instinct for freedom over the comfortable and easy winter. But now he yearned to join his comrades in the sky. He flapped his stretched wings as he strained toward the flock, but he had grown fat and indolent and unable to fly. The wild duck had become a tame duck.

The easy way through our problems, though appealing, may not be the best way. (Remember...the only place you will find success before work is in the dictionary!). It's always easier to borrow than to save; easier to jump in now than to do the hard work of planning; easier to postpone confronting a situation than to remedy it; easier to cut corners than to do it right; easier to remain the same than to make changes.

If you want to fly, you may have to pay a price. But freedom is worth it -- at any cost!
Are you ready to soar?

-Author Unknown

Game of life

Imagine life as a game in which you are juggling some five balls in the air. You name them - work, family, health, friends and spirit and you're keeping all of these in the air. You will soon understand that work is a rubber ball. If you drop it, it will bounce back. But the other four balls - family, health, friends and spirit - are made of glass.

If you drop one of these, they will be irrevocably scuffed, marked, nicked, damaged or even shattered. They will never be the same. You must understand that and strive for balance in your life.

How? Don't undermine your worth by comparing yourself with others. It is because we are different that each of us is special. Don't set your goals by what other people deem important. Only you know what is best for you. Don't take for granted the things closest to your heart. Cling to them as they would your life, for without them, life is meaningless. Don't let your life slip through your fingers by living in the past or for the future. By living your life one day at a time, you live ALL the days of your life.

Don't give up when you still have something to give. Nothing is really over until the moment you stop trying. Don't be afraid to admit that you are less than perfect. It is this fragile thread that binds us to each other.

Don't be afraid to encounter risks. It is by taking chances that we learn how to be brave. Don't shut love out of your life by saying it's impossible to find time. The quickest way to receive love is to give; the fastest way to lose love is to hold it too tightly; and the best way to keep love is to give it wings.

Don't run through life so fast that you forget not only where you've been, but also where you are going.

Don't forget, a person's greatest emotional need is to feel appreciated.

Don't be afraid to learn. Knowledge is weightless, a treasure you can always carry easily.

Don't use time or words carelessly. Neither can be retrieved. Life is not a race, but a journey to be savoured each step of the way.

Yesterday is History,

Tomorrow is a Mystery and

Today is a gift: that's why we call it The Present.

-Author Unknown

Rules For A Happy Marriage (Part 1)

So you finally found someone you want to spend the rest of your life with. And you have decided to get married. There is no easy recipe for a happy marriage, but you have a pretty good feeling that your love will help you weather the storms all relationships inevitably go through. In addition to that, here are some tips to remember for a happy and healthy marriage.

1. Change yourself first

The happier you are with yourself and your life, the more attractive you are to your partner. Another way to look at this is - if you were someone else, would you marry you?

Start today to work on being the kind of person you would want to know, date, and marry. If you're not that kind of person, how can you expect your spouse to stay attracted or stay passionate?

2. You, your spouse and then we

You don't have to give up your identity to be known as your spouse's partner. It also doesn't work when two people each do their own thing without regard to their partner's wishes and feelings. Marriage is more than cohabitation. The marriage vows state, "two shall be as one". That "one" is neither you nor him. The "one" is a third entity: the relationship, the marriage, the "we".

The "we" is what you share, what you have in common, the nurturing that cannot be provided on your own. Think companionship, intimacy, and sharing.

3. Emotional baggage – leave them behind

Are you really over your previous relationship? If not, you can't fully commit to your spouse. Likewise, if you are still Daddy's little girl or Mommy's boy, you are not in control of your own life. Therefore, you cannot fully enter into an adult relationship of mutual sharing and support. You can't be accountable to your spouse if you have to keep pleasing somebody else.

4. Your marriage is your priority

Marriage is the strongest bond between two people. Parents will be gone one day. Children grow into adults and leave to start their own lives. Your spouse is only person who is meant to stay with you the rest of your time on earth. Women who say their children come first are usually unable to let their children grow up and become independent adults. These women are always surprised when their husband get tired of being second and leave for another woman who WILL put them first.

Rules For A Happy Marriage (Part 2)

In Rules For A Happy Marriage (Part 1), we shared some tips for a happy and lasting marriage.

These are the secret for being happy with yourself and your life before you can be capable of making your spouse happy.

Now, let us look at more ways to keep your marriage rewarding and joyful.

I would like to emphasize again how important that your marriage is your first priority. You did not get married to commute two hours a day, or work at the office 60 hours a week. You probably got married to share your life, your hopes and your dreams with your spouse. Not only during good times and especially during bad times, keep in mind why you married in the first place. Not jobs, nor cars, nor your favorite sports team. Remember, at one time, your partner matters most to you in this world. Well, act like it every day.

Don't keep looking elsewhere. This holds true in your life as well as in your marriage. There will always be a couple that seems happier, wealthier, sexier, and more perfect than both of you. So what? Their happiness doesn't increase or diminish your happiness. Neither does their money, their jobs, their house, or their glamour. All that matters is whether you and your spouse have created a relationship that works for you.

Stop wondering "what if?" Wondering what it would be like to be with another person for a night or for a lifetime is self delusion and is really unfair to your spouse. You see other people socially when they are at their best. You see your spouse all the time when he/she is at his best, her average, and sometimes at her worst. If you could swap mates, guess what? You'd see that person at his/her worst, and you probably wouldn't like what you see.

Commit to your marriage. It's as simple as making the decision to be totally committed to your spouse and to the relationship. No matter what happens financially, health wise or other matters. No matter what. Once the two of you have decided to stay "no matter what", there is no question of stay or go, yes or no. Now the emphasis is on problem solving. And all couples have problems. Happy couples learn to deal with their problems. Unhappy couples just run away.

A happy marriage won't happen by itself. It takes intention, commitment, and practice. But the couples who have happy, blissful, and satisfying marriages are proof that it is possible. Just choose to be happy, and choose to be happily married.

Instructions For Life

1. Give people more than they expect and do it cheerfully.
2. Memorize your favorite poem.
3. Don't believe all you hear, spend all you have or sleep all you want.
4. When you say, "I love you", mean it.
5. When you say, "I'm sorry", look the person in the eye.
6. Be engaged at least six months before you get married.
7. Believe in love at first sight.
8. Never laugh at anyone's dreams.
9. Love deeply and passionately. You might get hurt but it's the only way to live life completely.
10. In disagreements, fight fairly. No name calling.
11. Don't judge people by their relatives.
12. Talk slowly but think quickly.
13. When someone asks you a question you don't want to answer, smile and ask, "Why do you want to know?"
14. Remember that great love and great achievements involve great risk.
15. Call your mom.
16. Say "bless you" when you hear someone sneeze.

17. When you lose, don't lose the lesson.
18. Remember the three R's: Respect for self; Respect for others; Responsibility for all your actions.
19. Don't let a little dispute injure a great friendship.
20. When you realize you've made a mistake, take immediate steps
21. Smile when picking up the phone. The caller will hear it in your voice.
22. Marry a man/woman you love to talk to. As you get older, their conversational skills will be as important as any other.
23. Spend some time alone.
24. Open your arms to change, but don't let go of your values.
25. Remember that silence is sometimes the best answer.
26. Read more books and watch less TV.
27. Live a good, honorable life. Then when you get older and think back, you'll get to enjoy it a second time.
28. Trust in God but lock your car.
29. A loving atmosphere in your home is so important. Do all you can to create a tranquil harmonious home.
30. In disagreements with loved ones, deal with the current situation. Don't bring up the past.
31. Read between the lines.
32. Share your knowledge. It's a way to achieve immortality.
33. Be gentle with the earth.
34. Pray. There's immeasurable power in it.
35. Never interrupt when you are being flattered.
36. Mind your own business.
37. Don't trust a man/woman who doesn't close his/her eyes when you kiss.
38. Once a year, go some place you've never been before.
39. If you make a lot of money, put it to use helping others while you are living. That is wealth's greatest satisfaction.
40. Remember that not getting what you want is sometimes a stroke of luck.
41. Learn the rules then break some.
42. Remember that the best relationship is one where your love for each other is greater than your need for each other.
43. Judge your success by what you had to give up in order to get it.
44. Remember that your character is your destiny.
45. Approach love and cooking with reckless abandon.

Contrary to what some believed, this is not written by Dalai Lama. The list, Instructions For Life, came from a book, which in this case is Life's Little Instruction Book.

-Life's Little Instruction Book

Nonetheless these are some very good instructions for life.

Happiness

Every day, as we seek happiness, the world seduces us with a ceaseless barrage of things and people we can possess. It gives us plenty of compelling reasons why we should have them. It could be a new car, a new loud suit or even a new wife.

But if our happiness depends on our possessions, then we are destined to spend our lives chasing after an illusion.

A thirsty poet was walking in the woods one night when he came upon a well with a bucket and an attached rope. He looked into the well and the vision that met his eyes made his heart stop momentarily. Although a man accustomed to waxing lyrical about almost anything, he found no words to describe the beauty of the tranquil, perfectly round object, shimmering with ivory light at the bottom of the well.

Determined that such a dazzling thing should be his, he lowered the bucket into the well and tried to "catch" the object. The instant the bucket touched the water, the thing of beauty began to waver and distort. The poet brought up several buckets full of water, but the object remained at the bottom of the well. After the ripples had settled, it seemed to mock him with its serenity and inertia.

Undeterred, the poet labored the entire night until finally, he had emptied the well. He looked down and was shocked to see that the vision of beauty was no longer there! Worn out and distraught, he fell on his back, bemoaning his "loss". At that moment, he saw the fading moon in the sky, making way for the morning sun, and finally understood his folly.

Like the poet in the story, many of us spend our lives attempting to possess the objects of our desires. We try vainly to "scoop up the moon", not realizing that it's merely a reflection we see. We assume falsely that what we want is right there in the water. We think that we can bring it up to us, and when we do, we will be happy.

Eventually, we look around and realize that we had wasted our time and energy on artificial and inconstant things. We had squandered the water that would have relieved our thirst. We look up and realize that the actual moon was in the sky all along. Its beauty was something that anyone could savor without effort or price, but that no one could own or control, no matter how hard one tried.

Trying to find happiness in possessing people or things will ultimately bring us heartache, frustration and regret. It is in realizing that although we cannot possess the moon, we can still behold its beauty, that we find lasting fulfillment and mental tranquility.



What Someone Learnt About Life

What have you learnt about life?

You may not be a grey-haired sage of 80, but the truths of life are revealed throughout your lifetime. Although no one can claim to know all there is to know about life, you must have some idea.

Well, here's what someone learnt about life:

Don't go for looks. It can deceive. Don't go for wealth, for even that fades away. Go for someone who makes you smile, because only a smile can make a dark day seem bright.

It's true that we don't know what we've got until we lose it. But it's also true that we don't know what we've been missing until it arrives.

Always put yourself in others' shoes. If you feel that it hurts you, it probably does hurt the person too.

A careless word may kindle strife. A cruel word may wreck a life. A timely word may level stress. A loving word may heal and bless.

Love is when you take away the feeling, the passion, and the romance, and you find that you still care for that person.

The happiest of people don't necessarily have the best of everything. They just make the best of everything that comes their way.

Sometimes, the most extensive article may say very little or nothing to you, but a short and simple phrase says it all.

Our Balance Sheet of Life

Our Birth is our Opening Balance

Our Death is our Closing Balance

Our Prejudiced Views are our Liabilities

Our Creative Ideas are our Assets

Heart is our Current Asset

Soul is our Fixed Asset

Brain is our Fixed Deposit

Thinking is our Current Account

Achievements are our Capital

Character & Morals, our Stock-in-Trade

Friends are our General Reserves

Values & Behaviour are our Goodwill

Patience is our Interest Earned

Love is our Dividend

Children are our Bonus Issues

Education is Brands / Patents

Knowledge is our Investment

Experience is our Premium Account

The Aim is to Tally the Balance Sheet of life Accurately

The Goal is to get the Best Presented Accounts Award.

Some Very Good And Very Bad Things

The most destructive habit.....Worry

The greatest Joy.....Giving

The greatest loss.....Loss of self-respect

The most satisfying work.....Helping others

The ugliest personality trait.....Selfishness

The most endangered species.....Dedicated leaders

Our greatest natural resource.....Our youth

The greatest "shot in the arm".....Encouragement

The greatest problem to overcome.....Fear

The most effective sleeping pill.....Peace of mind
The most crippling failure disease.....Excuses
The most powerful force in life.....Love
The most dangerous pariah.....A gossip
The world's most incredible computer.....The brain
The worst thing to be without.....Hope
The deadliest weapon.....The tongue
The two most power-filled words....."I Can"
The greatest asset.....Faith
The most worthless emotion.....Self-pity
The most beautiful attire.....SMILE!
The most prized possession.....Integrity
The most powerful channel of communication.....Prayer
The most contagious spirit.....Enthusiasm
The most important thing in life.....GOD



Contentment

Contentment is a rare state of mind that even the wisest among us sometimes find strenuous to attain.

There is no end to what the heart can desire, and because we can never have all that we want, we will always be unhappy if we can't be satisfied with what we have.

The way to happiness is to learn how to restrain our human desires, especially the desire to have more. Disappointment comes when we can't obtain what we desire or expect.

We foolishly ignore our loved ones to obtain what we desire, only to find the joy it brings is only temporal.

Someone once said that "the constant pre-occupation with self and selfish desires is a sure road to misery".

Avoid self-pity. Recognize that everyone, even pop stars and millionaires, have problems. Accept your situation and take small steps to improve it.

Helping others in little ways brings unexpected happiness. It takes your focus away from the "Poor Me!" syndrome.

Appreciate and treasure what you have now. You can never tell what will happen tomorrow. You may lose that special friend or loved one whom you've been taking for granted.

A wise man once said, "Seek not wealth or riches. Instead, seek to be wise."



Something To Ponder

The following is something to ponder if you don't know what to be thankful for.

If you have food in the refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof overhead and a place to sleep ... you are richer than 75% of this world.

If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, and spare change in a dish someplace ... you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy.

If you woke up this morning with more health than illness ... you are more blessed than the million who will not survive this week.

If you have never experienced the danger of battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture, or the pangs of starvation... you are ahead of 500 million people in the world.

If you can attend a church or synagogue meeting without fear of harassment, arrest, torture, or death ... you are more blessed than three billion people in the world.

If your parents are still alive and still married ... you are very rare, even in the United States.

If you hold up your head with a smile on your face and are truly thankful ... you are blessed because the majority can, but most do not.

If you can hold someone's hand, hug them or even touch them on the shoulder ... you are blessed because you can offer a healing touch.

If you can read this message, you just received a double blessing in that someone was thinking of you, and furthermore, you are more blessed than over two billion people in the world that cannot read at all.

Now isn't that something to ponder about?

Commit To Be Happy

Today, I reaffirmed a personal commitment to be happy, in spite of what life hands me. I've decided that there are too many things over which I have no control, and the only thing I can do is to stop allowing them to make dents in my spirit.

Happiness is not something that others can take from me. It's something that I would have to throw away on my own.

There will be times when things don't turn out the way I want them to. My best friend at work may turn out to be a power-hungry corporate animal that backstabs me at every opportunity. The promotion I worked so hard for may go to someone else. My partner might decide to leave me, a day before we are due to go for a vacation together. I may lose most of my savings in a market crash.

These are things that can happen to the most loving, compassionate, careful and reasonable person. But after the initial pain and shock, the decision whether or not to let myself languish in despair is entirely up to me. I can allow misfortune to form the bulk of my life, or I can choose to leave what's past in the past, and move on.

One's friendly and caring behavior towards others should not be motivated by the thought of equally kind and affectionate responses. You understand yourself best, and regardless of how reasonably and responsibly you live your life, there will be people who won't see your point of view or share your motivations.

People have the right to act in any way they see fit. I don't have the right to judge whether their behavior is acceptable or not. They have to bear the responsibility for their own actions, and so do I. By feeling sorry for myself, I am simply continuing the work for them, long after they've dealt their blow. I've decided that, as far as possible, I will not allow these people to disturb my mind.

There are many things for which I can be grateful. There are yet unexplored experiences in which I can find enrichment and meaning. There are yet others who will like me for who I am, and in spite of who I am. If I spend my time being resentful and miserable, I'm denying myself the satisfaction of enjoying what this life has to offer.

There are enough unhappy people in this world who punish themselves and others constantly in a bid to find redress and compensation. But there is no satisfaction in retaliation and revenge. It's a waste of time and spirit.

Condemning Yourself for Past Mistakes

How do you deal with your past mistakes?

Today, I'd like to recommend a great way to burden your mind, waste time, and lower your self-esteem.

It's called **Condemning Yourself for Past Mistakes**.

Try it out on yourself and people you dislike! It's very easy to do, and anyone can do it. It's great for injecting endless hours of frustration and stress into your life!

I've known many people who do this very well, but just in case you're having some difficulty, here are some pointers to send you on your way?

First, think of all the things you did or failed to do in the past. Especially, things which you cannot do anything about it now. Constantly remind yourself of them and beat yourself up for them.

A good way to do this is to keep whining about them. If you can regularly complain to others, it is even better! Remember to sigh a lot too. There's nothing like constant verbal repetition for these past mistakes to really stick.

Then, tell yourself that you'll never be able to adjust your behavior to prevent similar errors in future. Learning from mistakes just never crossed your mind. Remember, self-improvement is a myth.

This kind of thinking will start a vicious cycle. Remembering how incapable, unlovable, and foolish you are will enable you to continue repeating past mistakes. Now this part is essential in order for the entire self-loathing process to work.

In no time, you'll be able to whittle your self-esteem down to such a degree that you will have no problem thinking you're absolutely incapable of success and happiness. The strategy is laughably simple: reinforce negative thoughts and experiences and they will inevitably lead to negative feelings and outcomes.

Remember, you are not special, you are not unique. The world simply doesn't need another loser like you. If you're doing everything right, by this time, you would have lost most of your friends, alienated your family members, lost your appetite for food and life, and are looking forward to a lonely, meaningless existence.

So, if you're ever bored, and need to kill some time, depress your spirit and embrace failure as lord of your life, try condemning yourself for past mistakes. Have fun!



Realizing Your Dream

The first day of school our professor introduced himself and challenged us to get to know someone we didn't already know. I stood up to look around when a gentle hand touched my shoulder. I turned around to find a wrinkled, little old lady beaming up at me with a smile that lit up her entire being.

She said, "Hi handsome. My name is Abigail. I'm eighty seven years old. Can I give you a hug?" I laughed and enthusiastically responded, "Of course, you may!" and she gave me a giant squeeze.

"Why are you in college at such a young, innocent age?" I asked. She jokingly replied, "I'm here to meet a rich husband, get married, have a couple of children, and then retire and travel."

"No seriously," I asked. I was curious what may have motivated her to be taking on this challenge at her age. "I always dreamed of having a college education and now I'm getting one!" she told me.

After class we walked to the student union building and shared a coke. For three months we would leave class together and talk nonstop. I was always mesmerized listening to this "time machine" as she shared her wisdom and experience with me.

Over the course of the year, Abigail became a campus icon and easily made friends wherever she went. She loved to dress up and she reveled in the attention bestowed upon her from the other students. She was living it up.

At the end of the semester we invited Abigail to speak at our football banquet and I'll never forget what she taught us. She was introduced and stepped up to the podium. As she began to deliver her prepared speech, she dropped her three by five cards on the floor.

Frustrated and a little embarrassed she leaned into the microphone and simply said "I'm sorry I'm so jittery. I gave up beer for Lent and this whiskey is killing me! I'll never get my speech back in order so let me just tell you what I know." As we laughed she cleared her throat and began:

"We do not stop playing because we are old; we grow old because we stop playing. There are only four secrets to staying young, being happy, and achieving success.

"You have to laugh and find humor every day. You've got to have a dream. When you lose your dreams, you die. We have so many people walking around who are dead and don't even know it!"

"There is a huge difference between growing older and growing up. If you are nineteen years old and lie in bed for one full year and don't do one productive thing, you will turn twenty years old. If I am eighty-seven years old and stay in bed for a year and never do anything I will turn eighty-eight. Anybody can grow older. That doesn't take any talent or ability.

The idea is to grow up by always finding the opportunity in change." "Have no regrets. The elderly usually don't have regrets for what we did, but rather for things we did not do. The only people who fear death are those with regrets." She concluded her speech by courageously singing *The Rose*. She challenged each of us to study the lyrics and live them out in our daily lives:

"The Rose"

**Some say love, it is a river that drowns the tender reed.
Some say love, it is a razor that leaves your soul to bleed.
Some say love, it is a hunger, an endless aching need.
I say love, it is a flower, and you its only seed.**

**It's the heart afraid of breaking that never learns to dance.
It's the dream afraid of waking that never takes the chance.
It's the one who won't be taken, who cannot seem to give,
And the soul afraid of dyin' that never learns to live.**

**When the night has been too lonely and the road has been too long,
And you think that love is only for the lucky and the strong,
Just remember in the winter far beneath the bitter snows
Lies the seed that with the sun's love in the spring becomes the rose.**

At the year's end Abigail finished the college degree she had begun all those years ago. One week after graduation Rose died peacefully in her sleep. Over two thousand college students attended her funeral in tribute to the wonderful woman who taught by example that it's never too late to be all you can possibly be. These words have been passed along in loving memory of Abigail. REMEMBER, GROWING OLDER IS MANDATORY. GROWING UP IS OPTIONAL. We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give.

~Author Unknown

Follow Your Dreams

I have a friend named Monty Roberts who owns a horse ranch in San Ysidro. He has let me use his house to put on fund-raising events to raise money for youth at risk programs.

The last time I was there he introduced me by saying, "I want to tell you why I let Jack use my house. It all goes back to a story about a young man who was the son of an itinerant horse trainer who would go from stable to stable, race track to race track, farm to farm and ranch to ranch, training horses. As a result the boy's high school career was

continually interrupted. When he was a senior, he was asked to write a paper about what he wanted to be and do when he grew up.

That night he wrote a seven-page paper describing his goal of someday owning a horse ranch. He wrote about his dream in great detail and he even drew a diagram of a 200-acre ranch, showing the location of all the buildings, the stables and the track. Then he drew a detailed floor plan for a 4,000 square-foot house that would sit on the 200-acre dream ranch.

He put a great deal of his heart into the project and the next day he handed it in to his teacher. Two days later he received his paper back. On the front page was a large red F with a note that read, "see me after class."

The boy with the dream went to see the teacher after class and asked, "Why did I receive an F?"

The teacher said, this is an unrealistic dream for a young boy like you. You have no resources. Owning a horse ranch requires a lot of money. You have to buy the land. You have to pay for the original breeding stock and land. You have to pay for the original breeding stock and later you will have to pay large stud fees. There is no way you could ever do it. Then the teacher added, "If you will rewrite this paper with a more realistic goal, I will reconsider your grade."

The boy went home and thought about it long and hard. He asked his father what he should do. His father said, Look, son you have to make up your mind on this. However, I think it is a very important decision for you.

Finally, after sitting with it for a week, the boy turned in the same paper, not making any changes at all to his paper. He stated, "You can keep the F and I'll keep my dream."

Monty then turned to the assembled group and said, "I tell you this story because you are sitting in my 4,000-square-foot house in the middle of my 200-acre horse ranch. I still have that school paper framed over the fire-place, he added. The best part of the story is that two summers ago that same school teacher brought 30 kids to camp out on my ranch for a week. When the teacher was leaving he said, look Monty, I can tell you this now. When I was your teacher, I was something of a DREAM STEALER. During those years I stole a lot of kids' dreams. Fortunately you had enough guts, courage, belief and persistence to FOLLOW YOUR DREAM.

The key to this story is, do not let anyone steal your dreams, just follow your heart no matter what after all it is your dream.

Now if this true story does not stir up anything in you then you need to check, what am I made of. Remember to dream lofty dreams it does not cost you anything.

-Jack Canfield

The Magic Of Believing

I am not old enough to play baseball or football. I am not yet eight. My mom told me when you start baseball, you are not going to be able to run that fast because you had an operation. I told Mom! I would not need to run that fast. Because when I play baseball, I will hit the ball out of the park, so that I will be able to just walk.

- Edward J McGrath, Jr "AN EXCEPTIONAL VIEW OF LIFE"

Now why did I not think of it in this way?

ASK, ASK, ASK.

The greatest sales woman in the world today does not mind if you call her a girl. That is because Markita Andrews has generated more than eighty thousand dollars selling Girl Scout cookies since she was seven years old.

Going door-to-door after school, the painfully shy Markita transformed herself into a cookie-selling dynamo when she discovered, at age 13, the secret of selling.

It starts with desire, **A BURNING, WHITE-HOT DESIRE.**

For Markita and her mother, who worked as a waitress in New York after her husband left them when Markita was eight years old their dream was to travel the globe. "I will work hard to make enough money to send you to college," her mother said one day. "You'll go to college and graduate," you will make enough money to take you and me around the world. Okay?

So at age 13 when Markita read in her Girl Scout magazine that the Scout who sold the most cookies would win an all- expenses-paid trip for two around the world, she decided to sell all the Girl Scout cookies she could—more Girl Scout cookies than anyone in the world, ever.

But desire alone is not enough to make her dream come true, Markita knew she needed a plan.

Always wear your right outfit, your professional garb her aunt advised. "when you are doing business, dress like you are doing business. Wear your Girl Scout uniform. When you go up to people in their tenement buildings at 4:30 or 6:30 and especially on Friday night, ask for a big order. Always smile, whether they buy or not, always be nice. And don't ask them to buy your cookies; ask them to invest.

Lots of other scouts may have wanted that trip around the world. Lots of other Scouts may have had a plan. But only markita went off in her uniform each day after her DREAM. Hi. I have a dream. I am earning a trip around the world for me and my mom

by merchandising Girl Scout cookies, she would say at the door. Would you like to invest in one dozen or two dozen boxes of cookies?

Markita sold 3,526 boxes of Girl Scout cookies that year and won her trip around the world. Since then, she has sold more than 42,000 boxes of Girl Scout cookies, spoken at sales conventions across the country, starred in a Disney movie about her adventure and has co-authored the bestseller, **How To Sell More Cookies, Condos, Cadillac's, Computers.... And Everything Else.**

Markita is no smarter and no more extroverted than thousands of other people, young and old, with dreams of their own. The big difference is Markita has discovered the secret of selling: i.e. **ASK, ASK, ASK! Many people fail before they even begin because the fail to ask for what they want.** The fear of rejection leads many of us to reject ourselves and our dreams long before anyone else ever has the chance--- no matter what we are selling.

Actually everyone is selling something in a way. You are selling yourself everyday – in school, to your boss, to new people you meet, says Makita at 14. My mother is a waitress: she sells the daily special. Mayors and presidents trying to get votes are selling... One of my teacher's, who made geography so very interesting to her students, was really selling to her class. I see selling everywhere I look and selling is part of the whole world.

It takes courage for what you want. Courage is not the absence of fear. It's doing what it takes despite one's fear. And as Markita has discovered, the more you ask, the more easier it gets and it is also more fun.

Once, on live TV, the producer decided to give Markita her toughest selling challenge. Markita was asked to sell Girl Scout cookies to another guest on the show. Would you like to invest in one dozed or two dozen boxes of Girl Scout cookies? She asked.

Girl Scout cookies? I don't buy any Girl Scout cookies he replied. I am a Federal Penitentiary Warden. I put 2000 rapists, robbers. Criminals, muggers, and child abusers to bed every night

Unruffled, Markita quickly countered, Mister, if you take some of these cookies, maybe you won't be so mean and angry and evil. And, Mister, I think it would be a gook idea for you to take some of these cookies back for everyone of your 20000 prisoners, too. Markita asked.

The warden wrote a check.

Taken From Chicken Soup For The Soul by Jack Canfield & Mark V Hansen

THE KEY IS - IF YOU DON'T ASK YOU DON'T GET. BUT IF YOU DO YOU WILL



Two Monks

Two monks on a pilgrimage came to the ford of a river. There they saw a beautiful girl dressed in all her finery, obviously not knowing what to do since the river was too high she did not want to spoil her clothes. Without more ado, one of the monks took her on his back, carried her across and put her down on dry ground on the other side.

Then the monks continued on their way. But the other monk after an hour started complaining, "Surely it is not right to touch a woman, it is against the commandments to have close contact with women. How could you go against the rules of monks?"

The monk who carried the girl walked along silently, but finally he remarked, "I set her down by the river an hour ago, why are you still carrying her?"

Taken From Chicken Soup For The Soul by Jack Canfield

Do Not Be Afraid To Fail

You have failed many times, although you may not remember.

You fell down the first time you tried to walk.

You almost drowned the first time you tried to swim. Didn't you?

You lost your balance and fell the first time you tried to cycle.

The best soccer hero missed the goal at the penalty shoot out and lost his game

Did you hit the ball the first time you swung the bat?

R H Macy failed seven times before his store in New York caught on.

Babe Ruth struck out 1,300 times but he also hit 714 home runs.

Do not worry about failure.

Worry about the chances you miss when you do not try.

Taken From Chicken Soup For The Soul by Jack Canfield

Hare and Tortoise

Once upon a time a tortoise and a hare had an argument about who was faster.

They decided to settle the argument with a race. They agreed on a route and started off the race.

The hare shot ahead and ran briskly for some time. Then seeing that he was far ahead of the tortoise, he thought he'd sit under a tree for some time and relax before continuing the race. He sat under the tree and soon fell asleep.

The tortoise plodding on overtook him and soon finished the race, emerging as the undisputed champ.

The hare woke up and realized that he'd lost the race.

The moral - "Slow and steady wins the race. This is the version of the story that we've all grown up with."

THE STORY DOESN'T END HERE

There are few more interesting things.....it continues as follows.....

The hare was disappointed at losing the race and he did some soul-searching.

He realized that he'd lost the race only because he had been overconfident, careless and lax. If he had not taken things for granted, there's no way the tortoise could have beaten him. So he challenged the tortoise to another race.

The tortoise agreed. This time, the hare went all out and ran without stopping from start to finish. He won by several miles.

The moral - "Fast and consistent will always beat the slow and steady. It's good to be slow and steady; but it's better to be fast and reliable."

THE STORY DOESN'T END HERE

The tortoise did some thinking this time, and realized that there's no way it can beat the hare in a race the way it was currently formatted.

It thought for a while, and then challenged the hare to another race, but on a slightly different route. The hare agreed. They started off. In keeping with his self-made commitment to be consistently fast, the hare took off and ran at top speed until he came to a broad river. The finishing line was a couple of kilometers on the other side of the river.

The hare sat there wondering what to do.

In the meantime the tortoise trundled along, got into the river, swam to the opposite bank, continued walking and finished the race.

The moral - "First identify your core competency and then change the playing field to suit your core competency."

THE STORY STILL HASN'T ENDED

The hare and the tortoise, by this time, had become pretty good friends and they did some thinking together.

Both realized that the last race could have been run much better. So they decided to do the last race again, but to run as a team this time.

They started off, and this time the hare carried the tortoise till the riverbank. There, the tortoise took over and swam across with the hare on his back. On the opposite bank, the hare again carried the tortoise and they reached the finishing line together. They both felt a greater sense of satisfaction than they'd felt earlier.

The moral - "It's good to be individually brilliant and to have strong core competencies; but unless you're able to work in a team and harness each other's core competencies, you'll always perform below par because there will always be situations at which you'll do poorly and someone else does well.

Teamwork is mainly about situational leadership, letting the person with the relevant core competency for a situation take leadership.

Note that neither the hare nor the tortoise gave up after failures. The hare decided to work harder and put in more effort after his failure. The tortoise changed his strategy because he was already working as hard as he could."

In life, when faced with failure, sometimes it is appropriate to work harder and put in more effort.

Sometimes it is appropriate to change strategy and try something different.

And sometimes it is appropriate to do both.

The hare and the tortoise also learnt another vital lesson. When we stop competing against a rival and instead start competing against the situation, we perform far better. To sum up - the story of the hare and tortoise has much to say: Chief among them are that fast and consistent will always beat slow and steady; work to your competencies; pooling resources and working as a team will always beat individual performers; never give up when faced with failure; & finally, compete against the situation - not against a rival.