



In times like these, good news can be hard to find. Listening to mainstream media, the negativity can be disheartening, and focusing on bad news only seems to bring more bad news.

My friends and I decided to light a candle in the darkness. In *Reasons for Hope: Positive Messages for a Negative World*, we offer you 23 stories that offer reasons for hope regardless of world conditions.

We come from all walks of life and from all around the world. While we may not be able to change the whole world, we hope and believe that our stories will inspire, encourage, and give hope on an individual basis. We are simply trying to make a positive difference.

We encourage you to make a difference, too. All you need to do is share this ebook with others and you are helping to make a positive difference on this planet that we share.

We'll even reward you for sharing this ebook. At the end of the ebook you'll find information about how you can help us to bring hope to the world one person at a time. We "hope" you'll take the time to read that part.

Your publisher,

Dennis

PS – You'll also find information about telling *your* story in one of my ebooks at the end.

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“It ain’t over ‘til it’s over” –*Yogi Berra*

By Wayne C. Allen

Most do not get this, and give up way too early. You’re not done until you die—or give up.

This quote is from 1973. Yogi Berra was managing, and his New York Mets trailed the Chicago Cubs by 9½ games in the National League East. Berra realized that no matter how hopeless a situation seemed, the season did not end until the last out. The Mets rallied to win the division title on the next-to-last day of the season.

To be down seven runs with one out to go is no more significant than any other point in the game. Your duty is to *act*—in this case, to ‘play ball devotedly.’ The outcome is whatever it is. However, if you don’t swing the bat with the intention of winning, you doom yourself. So, you set an intention (in this case, to win) and you work toward it with full effort, until the very last.

Most give up a moment or so too soon—typically when the going gets tough, and the fog rolls in. Here’s a story:

My wife Darbella and I love to hike. One summer, we were in Newfoundland. We decided to follow a coastal trail, and have lunch overlooking the ocean. We had a map, kindly provided by the Newfoundland Department of Tourism.

As we headed off, Dar noticed a large pile of rocks that looked like a big dog. She called the rock stack “Fido.”

We walked for two hours. We arrived at the ocean, which was spectacular. We wandered around on the beach, and then had lunch. We sat on a ledge and looked at the map. It was 2 p.m., and the map showed that we were half way around the loop. We had to decide whether to turn around or press on. Being the adventurous sort, we pressed.

About a half hour later, we reached hills, valleys, and the trail started to wind around and back upon itself, crossing and re-crossing a river that

led to the ocean. Each time we rounded a turn, we assumed that we were on the home stretch. Each time, our hopes were dashed. Our spirits began to flag. Our legs ached, as did our stomachs. Soon, it was approaching 7 p.m.

We had no food, and we had only brought daypacks. The fog began to roll in. With the onset of dusk, it became impossible to rush. Dar began to flag. I did not want to spend the night huddled under a tree, so I turned into a drill sergeant.

Finally, I was sure we were beaten. We rounded a corner. I was ready to stop, to give up, when a fog shrouded, blurry object flashed past me. I thought, "Great! A bear! Now my life is complete." Imagine my shock when I recognized the blur was dear Darbella. Her cute little back end... I mean... backpack was racing ahead, and then disappearing into the Newfoundland fog.

What, I wondered, could have inspired this miraculous rejuvenation, just at the point when I had convinced myself that all was lost? As if through the mists of Avalon, a voice drifted back to me, "I see FIDO!" We were saved.

Of course, the joke is that we were never really lost. We later noticed some small text at the bottom of the map: "Map not to scale." (Only in Newfoundland...) Had we stopped and huddled under a tree when I was ready to give up, we would have spent the night in the woods—500 yards from our car.

Often, decisions to 'stop,' to 'pull up,' are made in a similar fog, just a few feet from success. Far better to continue walking, and to make course corrections as we go.

Zen considers *only* the present moment. What I choose to do in this moment is not pre-determined by anything. Blaming your mommy or your past relationships, your genetics or your lack of understanding (or a lousy map...) is just an excuse for not swinging for the fence, right now.

Remember: *the journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step, but only if you take it. And, of course, each step is a first step.*

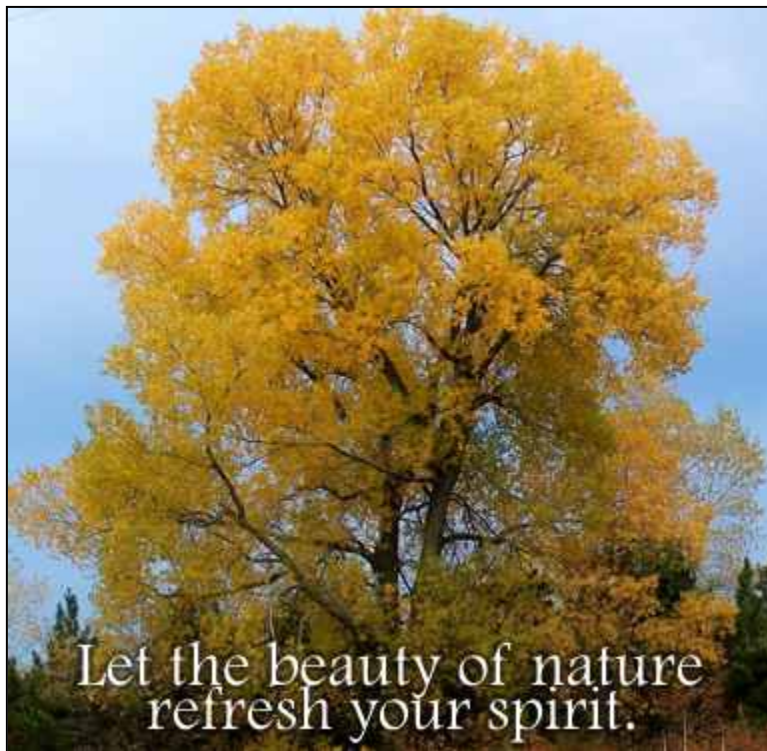
This story is an excerpt from Wayne's just released book, *Half Asleep in the Buddha Hall*.

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Wayne C. Allen is a Zen focused therapist and author. If you liked this story, you'll love his books! Subscribe to his blog and receive his most popular full length e-book, for free.

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The Worldwide Cookie Monster Club

By Jim Gleason

What is a "Cookie Monster?"

Cookie Monsters are those of us who start out each day looking for, and expecting to find, the "free cookies" that are available in life each and every day all around us. We have only to be open to them and "they will come."



The concept is based on the story about the father who left a note on the family kitchen table one morning: *"Something very special is going to happen to you today!"*

Each family member came down and read the note as they left to face their day - each thinking the note was meant for them.

That night over supper each family member excitedly shared the "something special" that had happened to them that day - each surprised that dad knew it was going to happen! Only when all shared the same story did they come to realize the note wasn't meant just for them - it was a rule that works for everyone.

If you go out looking for the good in your day - the good in the people you meet - you will find your own "something special" and will overlook and bounce off those negative things that happen to everyone every day since you are too busy focusing on the good things. A simple but effective way of enjoying life more - and making life more enjoyable for others too!

What are "free cookies?"

Free cookies are those little and big things that happen to each and every one of us daily that the average person calls "good luck." In some cases it is exactly what the name implies - somebody offers you a real, honest to goodness cookie that you can put into your mouth and eat!

Most of the time a "free cookie" takes on the form of a good deed (a driver gestures you to pull in front of them, a helping hand at work), a gift of self (a

smile, an unsolicited "Hello" or "Hi!", a loving hug), while other times it can be a really big pleasant surprise (winning the lottery, a gift arrives in the mail, somebody sends you a bouquet of flowers - "just because!").

These things happen to all of us every day - but most people are too mired down in the negatives and miss them. Cookie Monsters are constantly on the alert, savoring and sharing each and every "free cookie" of the day.

Cookie Monsters are people who start each day looking for the "free cookies." Well, what the heck does that mean, you may ask? Simply, they're the folks who are likely to see the rainbow rather than the mud puddle after the storm.

They're the ones who know that it IS good luck to find a shiny penny even if Lincoln's kissing the ground.

They're the ones who share themselves and enjoy just about anyone they meet. They're the ones who think a frown is an upside down smile. I think you get the picture.

Motto of the WW Cookie Monster Club:

"Changing the world, one smile at a time..."

Finding other Cookie Monsters

...is really very easy. Cookie Monsters tend to naturally gravitate to each other - even if they have never met before. Two Cookie Monsters at any gathering (no matter how small or large the crowd) will always find each other - it's a law of nature.

When you come in contact with a Cookie Monster (or even pass close by...), you (and any stranger for that matter) find yourself automatically saying "Hi!" to them. If they are in a group of other people you may find yourself not saying hello to others in the same crowd - the others in the crowd will later ask the Cookie Monster how they know you, only to find the Cookie Monster replying: "I never met that person before now - but wasn't that nice of them to say "Hi!" like that?"

Friends of a Cookie Monster are always mystified that this happens a lot - unless, of course, the friend happens to be a Cookie Monster themselves - they

understand and don't even ask the question - but then you probably said "Hi!" to the second Cookie Monster too, right?

Some famous Cookie Monsters:

- Leo Buscaglia
- Pope John Paul
- John F. Kennedy
- Mother Theresa
- Richard Simmons
- Anthony Robbins

How do you know a "Cookie Monster" when you see one?

Cookie Monsters can easily be recognized by their spirited attitude, words and actions. Look for the following signs...

- Cookie Monsters use words like...
"Hi!", "Thanks!!", "Wow!!!", "That's great!", "beautiful..."
...always spoken with enthusiasm!!! (They also use "!'s" a lot)
- Cookie Monsters tend to smile a lot, even when it's raining ("makes the grass green and the flowers bloom...")
- Cookie Monsters look to give to others all the time - they tend to be outgoing and sharing - they are people you feel like talking to out of a crowd (...even when they're strangers to you, because they're not really strangers to anybody, they're just friends you haven't met yet)
- Cookie Monsters don't just laugh - they "bubble" with a joy of life (not easy to define, but you'll know it when you see it) that they just have to share with others (others being anyone within reach)
- Cookie Monsters take the time to "smell the roses..." in life, even when they are very busy (which they almost always are...)

- Cookie Monsters reading this will automatically recognize themselves as being one - and will freely admit it. Non- Cookie Monsters will not.
- When Cookie Monsters get up in the morning (usually early...) they look down and note that they are “above ground” and count that as their “first blessing” of that day and can be overheard saying:

“Hot damn! – above ground another day! This is going to be a good one!!!”

How you can become a member of the “Cookie Monsters” club

The Cookie Monster Club is not an exclusive club, but rather an “inclusive club” that welcomes everyone. Anyone who exhibits the above characteristics can be welcomed into the Cookie Monster’s Club by any existing member at any time.

The only real criteria are that they want to share this special spirit with others - but then all Cookie Monsters want to do that. A Cookie Monster will automatically accept the invitation - they are not suspicious of other people, especially one they recognize as a fellow Cookie Monster - even though they never heard of the Cookie Monster Club before. Cookie Monsters always look for and expect the best in other people - and they seldom are let down in that quest.

Age requirements...

Cookie Monsters come in all ages - and are not aware of their chronological years on this earth normally referred to as “age” - they only count their mental age. Cookie Monster’s age contrary to the laws of nature - they get younger with each passing year. The joy they find and share with others seems to be the root of this unusual phenomenon.

Are you a Cookie Monster? Yes?? **Welcome to the club!!!**

Author: Jim Gleason

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The Cookie Monster Club concept was developed and written by Jim Gleason, heart recipient, 10/19/94.

From Blocked to Flourishing, Reasons for Hope for your Creativity

By Leslie Ann Gebhart, M.A

Isn't it inspiring to read the phrase, "Reasons for Hope"? Writing from the perspective of sixty plus years I have much evidence to support that there are reasons for hope and one of the most exciting is the understanding of the energy of creativity.

Yes, your energy of creativity. If you are already tapped into it, I say, "Rock on!" For me, it's a relatively new discovery and I love to speak about it, encourage others about it and now, write to you about it.

Each of us is hard wired with the capacity to tap into the flow of creativity. Whether you believe that creativity is external or internal or a combination is not important. What matters is that you be willing to experience it.

I lived for so many years under the mistaken assumption that I'm not creative. I admired others' art, enjoyed visiting sculpture gardens, botanical gardens, watching up-lifting film productions, attending art shows and outdoor festivals admiring, sometimes drooling, sometimes feeling envy and always knowing that creative talent was mine to admire not to experience. **WRONG!**

I put **WRONG** in caps, because that internal voice was so loud. If you are experiencing a bit of negative chatter inside your own head as you read this, I invite you to consider the creative options that truly are yours—and mine.

I've crossed over into understanding that my brand of creativity may not hang in a museum or be sold, collected or used to design a web site, yet it does enrich my life every single day and sometimes brings a smile to others too; that's how I know that there are reasons for hope for creative flourishing for you too.

I've progressed from being stuck, blocked, non-expressive to living in an orange house with multi colored interior walls, yellow exterior walls surrounded by painted rocks and



collected treasures that enhance the flowered landscape near the path to my front door which I carved and sanded and enhanced myself (yes, the granny with the power tools).



I feel so inspired and newly energized by all the creative options now at my disposal that I went back to school for training on how to professionally encourage others to tap into their unique style of creativity. (Yes, I was the oldest member of my graduating class; so what?!)

As both a facilitator of the book study of Julia Cameron's *The Artist's Way* and a certified professional life coach, I now delight in prodding, encouraging, threatening (ever so nicely), admonishing, pleading, suggesting, and otherwise supporting you to tap into that creativity which flows your direction. There are so many reasons for hope!

Particularly in times of economic challenges and the media ever ready to blitz us with the next horror or tragedy, there are reasons for hope. Using my creativity, I've established a habit of turning bad news into opportunities.

Yep. Sound simple?

It is. You, too can use your energy of creativity to enhance your forward progress whether it be in the work place, within your family or in your studio or sacred space where you are available to get centered, focused and pay attention to what matters most to you right now. In my life coaching business, I refer to this as your next calling.

You've surely noticed that there is lots of gloom and doom constantly present on radio and television. It sometimes manages to seep into my awareness, even after I've consciously determined to avoid it. One thing we know for sure is the more one listens to the fear tactics and negative views on which mainstream media tends to focus, the more affect it has. Ugh.

Have you experienced feeling up-lifted and energized by a certain program (for me it's Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood & Andre Rieu & his symphony orchestra)? Have you also experienced the opposite by listening to the horrors or bad news challenges, then feeling discouraged and negative?

What's exciting about the concept of "Reasons for Hope" is that we get to emphasize that within those challenges are also opportunities; a way to build and develop new creative muscles.

For you an orange house with yellow walls may be unappealing. Yet, you have your own version of where you'd like to use your creative energy right now.

Yes, you do.

So, why do I digress from supportive thoughts to the negative media in the context of reasons for hope? It's called working with what we've got. In this western culture as blessed as we are by much bounty, we have allowed the mainstream media to be pervasive. Instead of feeling dejected, sad and distressed by it, I suggest using it as a reminder to take charge; your unique brand of creativity is available to you when you decide you're ready to put your focus on it.

Options to consider:

1. Notice when it is that you want to turn on the television or radio. Is it when you are tired, frustrated, wanting a break from routine, wanting to over-ride your thoughts? Consider the alternative: Stop listening to the negatively biased media. Resist mindlessly turning it on and beginning surfing.

Instead, select your own DVD, a comedy show that suits your mood or something you've recorded. Or, listen to uplifting music, a motivational lecture or CD of a book you choose. You can still have 'down time' with the television or radio without infusing yourself with fear and negativity.

2. Pay attention to how you are thinking - that inner critic voice that for some of us seems incessant is not necessarily telling you the truth. The bumper sticker on the car ahead read, "You don't have to believe everything you think." Brilliant! If that little negative chatter is running on and on and on filled with discouragements, say, "Stop it." You get to choose. You really are in charge of that inner critic.

You definitely get more of what you think about, so choose to focus on what you want, what you would rather have than that scary thought. You are the boss of that thinker of yours. You can use your creativity to

design a vision board or collage of things that matter to you, create a new project out of that stack of photos; you get the idea.

3. Check out your company. If you're feeling discouraged or that your creativity isn't being supported, is it time to find new pals? There are positive, uplifting people and if you're not around them, go find some. Yes you can. That's a coaching constructive action. And, it doesn't necessarily require spending money to find it. Use your creativity to be resourceful:

- Visit the library
- Call the museum to see if they have a 'free' day for visiting
- Inquire about volunteering where your interest leads
- Consider bartering; what skill can you trade?
- Set aside 10 minutes, set the timer and write a list of all the things you've been meaning to do
- Set aside a second 10 minutes to listing a small action you can take toward realizing one of the dreams/goals on the first list

Notice how you feel when you are reading or creating or looking over your own list. It's typical that you'll feel a version of "warm and fuzzy" because these things matter to you.

You might also feel disappointed with a sense of yearning or longing for what might have been. Even these are reasons for hope. You can make a choice to take that good feeling state or that discouraged one and tap into your creativity to come up with what you are willing to do now in support of getting more of what you say you want. You are in charge!

One of the highlights of experiencing these reasons for hope and this sample of coaching away blocks to creativity is that your excuses and old stories get to count for nothing.

What counts for a lot, are the incremental actions you can decide to take next. You can take constructive action the minute you decide to do so. It really is a creative decision. There are many ways to express your creativity, many

reasons for hope and you get to choose; you, too, can go from blocked to flourishing.

Yes you can!

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You'll find immediate access to your free Special Report, *12 Tested Tips to Take Action to Expand your Creativity NOW*, on my [projects page](#). This special report is offered by Leslie Gebhart, M.A., PCC who supports you to connect with your creativity no matter what your work or leisure schedule. Feel free to paste this article into your own material so long as you also maintain the author contact information as is herein. Hope you found it useful! Make it a terrific day.



A Different Take on Hope

By Janet MacGregor

I remember the words of a relatively famous coach, Thomas Leonard: "Abandon all Hope. Hope causes problems because you take your eye off the present/reality."

Thomas didn't go into a lot of detail when he made that comment. It was part of his A Perfect Life teleseminar that I attended. It hit home for me though and this is what I think he meant.

I know hope is innate in all human beings. I know that hope has helped many people, including me, get through very difficult times. Hope that we will get a new job, hope that we don't lose our jobs, hope that we don't lose our home, hope that we can lose weight, hope that we or a loved one will be cured of cancer, hope that our children won't get into or be harmed by drugs, hope that we can make our next debt payments, hope for world peace - there's always something to hope for.

Hope is something we cling to. It provides a vehicle for making up stories about how things ought to be. It shadows the truth of what is going on in our lives and prevents us from accepting our current situation for what it is in the present moment. Often we get into hope paralysis and neglect to do, be, and say things that can have a far greater impact on our lives and lives of others. Hope is elusive. One day we have it and the next day it has faded. Faded into doubt that is the antithesis of hope and leads to worry.

In November 2002 I was on my annual visit to my mother who lived in Florida. She was 83 and in relatively good health. On my birthday, November 15th, she had a stroke. I was devastated. It affected her right side and her speech. From that day on, I never heard her speak another word. She spent 3 weeks in the hospital where she began physical and cognitive therapy. I hoped she would recover to some semblance of the active Mom I remembered.

I dropped everything going on in my business and life and stayed in Florida for three months taking care of mom's affairs, selling her house, and preparing to move her to Michigan where I could be closer to her. Each day I visited, I

hoped to see some improvement. I encouraged her, walked her down the halls, read to her, used cue cards to help her speak, and took her for walks in her wheel chair. She was devastated by her condition and her whole life had changed in one moment in time. All she really wanted was to be with her daughter and son. I was there physically but mentally in my place of hope.

Mom was moved to a nursing home where she continued in therapy making little improvement. Her heart wasn't in it. One day they told me she wasn't trying hard enough and was not making improvement so they could no longer give her therapy. My brother and I decided it was time for her to make the move to Michigan.

When she arrived in Michigan she went into another nursing home. I lived in a second floor condominium and there was no way to get her up and down 2 flights of stairs. I went to visit her almost every day. She was always in the moment. I kept hoping and she had abandoned hope. She knew she was on her final journey to be with God.

Slowly I came to realize that I was missing quality time with my mother because I was always hoping that I would find her improving when I arrived at the nursing home. My hope got in the way of reality and living in the precious moments I had left with my mother.

One day I got a call that she had fallen in the bathroom and broken her hip. She was operated on the following day to have her hip replaced. The day after the operation we were told she could no longer swallow. The choices were a feeding tube or let her starve. She never lost her ability to communicate via her eyes and her grunts. When I told her the options, she cried and shook her head no to the feeding tube option. Finally, I abandoned hope and faced the reality - she was ready to die. 7 days later, 6 months to the day after she had her stroke, my mother passed away.

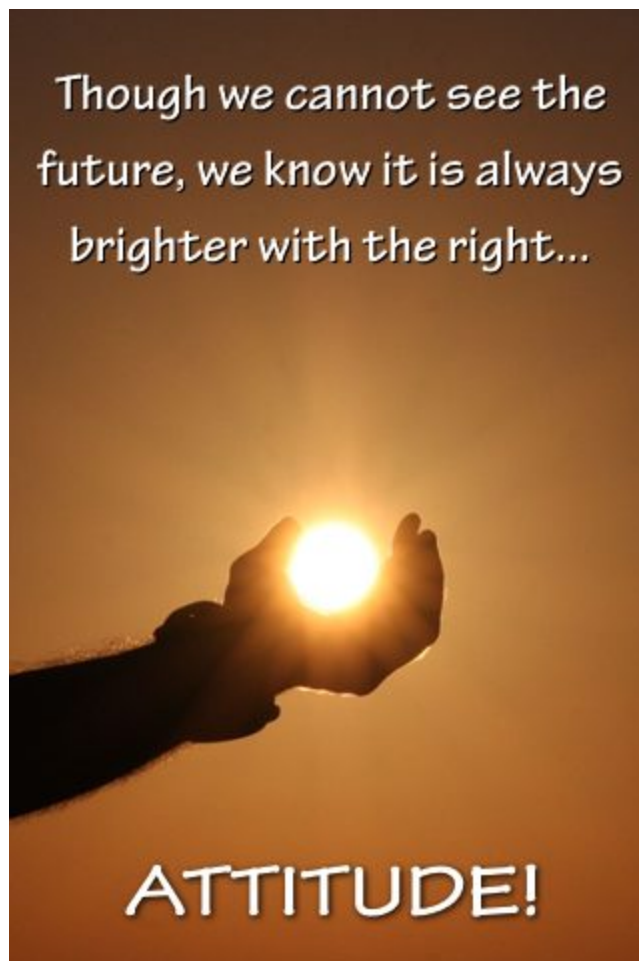
Mother taught me the lesson that Thomas Leonard articulated: Hope causes problems because you take your eye off the present/reality. Mother was able to abandon hope and live in the reality that she was going to leave this plane and I suspect in her mind, the sooner the better. It was a lesson of a lifetime for me.

There are multitudinous reasons to hope. Hope can get us through some very trying times. Perhaps the combination of hope and reality is what allows us to stand in the moment and face whatever life throws at us. Today I'm not

abandoning hope altogether, just spending more time in the present where I'm much more attuned to the reality that exists. From that place I am far more capable of thinking, feeling, seeing, doing. I don't want to miss another opportunity to just be there.

Author: Janet MacGregor
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Loving life!



Reasons for Hope

By Susan J. Roche

When you look back on society and social organization through the centuries, we learn how quickly things can change for the better, sometimes overnight. We should never underestimate the profound resilience of the human spirit, mind and soul.

Millions of people dream of wonderful times, whether it is endless holidays at exotic places, owning a Ferrari, or simply being mortgage free.

It is our world's dreamers and goal setters who have dreamt about things that were supposedly impossible to achieve, but because they never gave up, and kept chipping away day by day to grow into their dream, they achieved their goals against all the odds.

If you ask yourself *why* you want to achieve something, and the reason is extremely important to you, then the *how* becomes the easy part in reaching your goal. You have heard many times, or maybe said it yourself, "I don't know how," but you can learn. There has never been a better time in the history of mankind to learn whatever is necessary in order to fill the gaps needed to achieving your goal.

You only have to look at the world achievers to know this is true, as Gandhi said, "You must be the change you want to see in the world."

J.K. Rowling is extremely famous worldwide for her "rags to riches" life story in which she progressed from living on welfare to multi-millionaire status within five years.

Imagine though, the long wait she had whilst her agent finally found a publisher. If she had given up we would have never had the pleasure of her wonderful books and films of the well-loved Harry Potter.

We are all influenced or inspired by someone whom we admire, so taking a cue from them is an excellent way to embrace hope. Three of Abraham Lincoln's famous quotes were:

- "I am a slow walker, but I never walk backwards."
- "I do not think much of a man who is not wiser today than he was yesterday."
- "The way for a young man to rise is to improve himself in every way he can, never suspecting that anybody wishes to hinder him."

When you want and hope so badly for success, a few months seems like forever. When I started my business, and six months later I only had two sales, well, you can imagine the frustration after hours upon hours of work every day, even on weekends.

I could have easily given up, but we all must have hope, and realize that anything good is well worth the effort, even if this means changing direction to get where we want to be.

The journey from A to B is rarely easy, if you were traveling from the top of Scotland and wanted to arrive in Cornwall at the bottom of England, which is well over 800 miles, there will be tasks and obstacles along the way to overcome.

If you got lost in London you would not think, "I am lost so let's go back home to Scotland." You would most likely take a break and have some refreshments; then ask for directions, making the most of your short stay in London before continuing your journey feeling positive and refreshed. The main thing is to enjoy the journey and make it a happy, relaxed experience. Enjoying the journey is as important as arriving at your destination.

Any improvement in our life begins with an improvement in our mental pictures. Your mental pictures or visualizations act as a natural guidance system that causes you to act in ways that make your visualizations come true in your life.

Your unconscious mind is similar to 'autopilot' in that it is the source of your creativity which works automatically in your behaviors, and consequently, the way you live your life. We just need to make sure we nurture the right mental

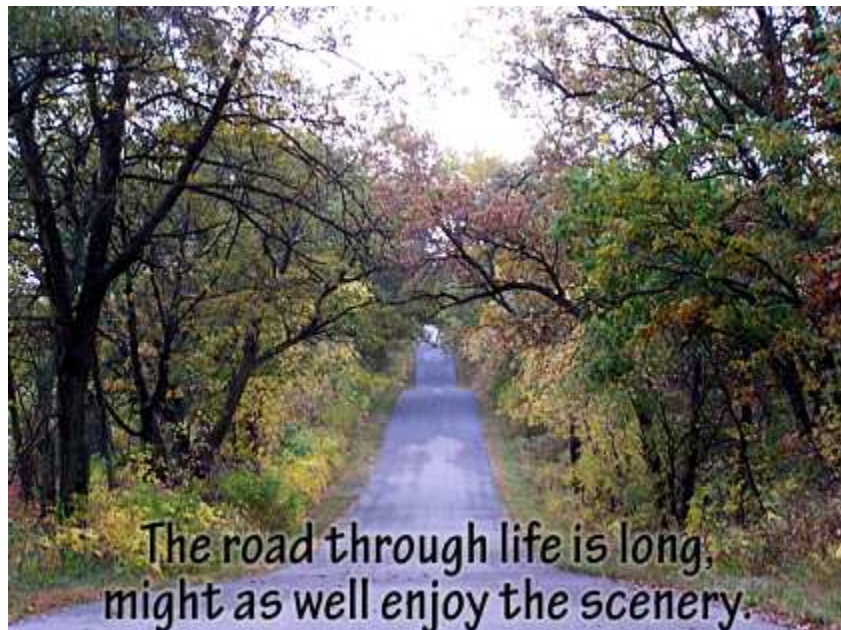
pictures in order that we may achieve the things we have set our hearts on. There is a well known saying "What you focus on, you get more of".

We don't all have to be religious, but we should all have faith in ourselves, in our intellect, and in our ability to move forward and grow into our dreams. Let us develop respect for all living things, and try to be more understanding and most of all have compassion for our fellow humans and our planet.

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The Seeds of Today

By Dennis Gaskill

Every day is a new beginning. If you've been having a rough go of it lately, any day can be the day things begin to turn around for the better.

The trouble is we often forget each day is a new beginning. We take our troubles to bed with us and we wake them up when we arise the next day. Living this way, we condemn ourselves to bear yesterday's burdens over and over, thus sucking the joy out of each new day.

You have to believe that each day is a new beginning, not only because it's logical, but because believing it helps it come about by focusing our attention on a different set of signals.

If you follow my ten point plan outlined below for the next 30 to 60 days I'm confident it will have a positive impact on your life.

1. Greet yourself when you get up each day by smiling at your image in the mirror. When you see a sincere smile, you'll feel a sincere smile. Don't wait for someone else to start your own happiness up for you!

Remember, yesterday is gone and today is a new beginning—so tell yourself today will be a *great* day. Consciously choose to be happy to be alive—you know what the alternative is! A happy life isn't made up of big victories each day. Remind yourself to look for the many *small daily joys* that are the *building blocks* of a truly happy life.

2. Did you know that smiling at someone makes them feel good about themselves? A smile signals your acceptance and approval of them. If it's someone you know, it tells them you're happy to see them.

Be the first to smile and greet your family, friends, co-workers, and acquaintances each day—and even people you don't know. Notice how their spirit seems to pick up a little because you smiled at them, and never underestimate the importance of that. Start each day on the right note with everyone and you'll be surprised at how much harmony that will lead to over time.

Notice too, how good it feels when they smile back at you. A smile is a double-blessing that colors the day better for the giver and recipient.

Everyone has secret sorrows that others know nothing about. Try to give at least one sincere compliment to someone each day. You might not know how important that compliment may be to someone, but you should know how important it is for each of us to do our part to make the world a better place, and on an individual level, we make the world a little better one person at a time.

The least deserving person may be the one most in need, so the “who” of it is less important than the “do” of it. Do this without expecting something in return. Some of our best future blessings happen because of previously unrewarded acts of kindness.

Also, try to find one honest "pat on the back" you can give yourself each day. Many of us are too critical of ourselves. Self-appreciation, if not for vanity's sake, helps us to learn to like ourselves in a deeper way. The better we honestly like who we are, the easier it is for others to like us and for us to like others. If you can't find one thing you like about yourself each day, perhaps others are having a hard time finding one too.

3. Make an effort to try to understand other people's points of view. Listen with undivided attention instead of thinking ahead about your reply as they talk. Too often we miss important signals that would help us in our relationships because we're not completely focused on the message and the messenger.
4. If you find yourself at odds with someone, be willing to consider that you may be wrong, or may have done something wrong. Apologize if need be. ***Apologizing never makes you smaller, it lifts the other person up from the diminished position you put them in.*** Their full appreciation of you can't be restored until you lift them out of the hole you put them in. An apology does this.

As much as we wish it were so, we are not always right. No one is always wrong either. Sometimes two people can be right at the same time even though they completely disagree; we all see things from our

own perspective. Solutions are often found in understanding the other person's perspective rather than insisting on our own.

If you're becoming angry with someone, ask yourself one thing:

Will what you're becoming angry over be important next month?

A great deal of the time when we find ourselves getting angry we are overreacting. The moment we realize we're getting angry over something trivial, try to find something humorous to say. You'd be surprised how well that can diffuse a potentially explosive situation. Laughter is good medicine for the human spirit.

5. As much as possible, avoid malcontents, staunch pessimists, and other energy stealers. They do nothing to build you up, but their attitude can drag you down. If we let them, they'd drag everyone down to their level of discouragement and despair—perhaps not intentionally, but because they don't know any better. At the same time, be aware that we are all equals on this planet, and that even the most unlikely person can provide an important lesson in life.
6. Be optimistic. If you're not an optimist now, this takes practice. As a reformed pessimist, I promise you it is well worth the effort. The optimist and pessimist are both right—for themselves—but only one makes a constant companion of hope. Where hope is, there too dwells the greatest potential for happiness. Chronic pessimists are seldom happy because they're always looking at the negative side of things.
7. Read something uplifting, encouraging, or enlightening each day. Cut back on the mental pollution that masquerades itself as news, literature and entertainment nowadays. You don't eat garbage from a dumpster, so don't make your mind a dumpster for mental garbage either.

As your body becomes healthier or weaker by what you feed it, your mind is made stronger or weaker by what you feed it as well. The diet of the mind may be the single biggest determining factor in how happy and successful you will be in life.

8. Spend a few minutes each night reflecting on the day gone by. Try to remove your ego from your reflections and be honest with yourself.

Learn what you can from the day. Then place Today into a box in your mind labeled Experience and put it into storage. You will only refer to it when you need to draw on your Experience, but you will not take it out and drag its burdens around when you get up tomorrow—for remember—each day is a fresh new beginning.

9. Lastly, be grateful for what you have. In addition to the obvious things like food, shelter, health, friends and family, be on the lookout for the little things to be grateful for that come to us each day. What we focus on we draw to us. By remembering to be grateful each day and by looking for the good in our lives we draw more good into our lives.

Gratitude is a double-edged weapon of hope. It not only helps draw more good into our lives, but by looking for the good we focus less on the bad, diminishing its effects.

Life is about relationships, with others and with your Self. As John Donne penned, "No man is an island." Making a habit of these simple practices will help you build better relationships with others and with your Self.

These practices will help you discover insights about yourself and about life that will help you to live more deliberately and help you to discover more purpose and meaning in your life. They are life-enhancing practices that will help you to lead a happier and more rewarding life that depends less on what's going on around you and more on what's going on inside you.

The seeds you plant today will become the harvest you reap another day, so **today** is the key to your future. It has always been so, only now you are reminded of it. That's how you live a happy life—one thoughtful, reflective, kind-hearted, hopeful, thankful, seed-planting day at a time.

Author: Dennis Gaskill

Website: BoogieJack.com

Are you a home business, small business, or hobbyist webmaster? Find out why millions of webmasters like you have relied on BoogieJack.com since 1997 for help with website design, marketing, earning money online and search engine optimization. If you liked the above article, you'll find a similar article in each issue of his newsletter so subscribe today!

When Good Enough is Good Enough

Ponderings after Bilateral Mastectomy for Breast Cancer

By Leslie Gebhart, M.A

It used to be true for me that, "Cancer doesn't run in our family." Not any more; yet there are still plenty of reasons for hope. I could go on and on about the possibilities after diagnosis and treatment because that's what I've learned to do both to support others and to encourage myself.

While there are many reasons for hope after cancer and treatment, perfection is no longer on my list. I now say, "Good enough is good enough." And that's partly because the life saving surgery for me also left my body missing some parts.

I am all for excellence, I aspire to it. I have a track record of insisting on attention to details. I appreciate quality; and I admire care and consideration given to:

- details on my professional stationery & products
- creating an inviting setting for guests to be comfortable and at ease
- making visitors to our village feel welcomed
- preparing the 'just right' lemonade
- planning an event
- arranging a bouquet
- ironing a collar
- If you're getting the idea that details matter to me, you're right!

Yet, having said all that, I also say that perfection or "extreme excellence" is over-rated. Perfectionism is a recipe for feeling grumpy, blocked, stuck, dissatisfied, and out of sorts. Perfectionism is for others, not those of us ready to create a whole new life after treatment.

Good enough really is good enough no matter what that little, negative voice is saying inside your head; and you don't have to look far to find many reasons for hope.

After treatment each person gets to re-design exactly how to use time, energy and talent. You get to make it up. I consider new learning as a life-style choice after treatment. You get to focus on your reasons for hope and what you'd rather be doing with your time. You get to say, "No" period when you'd rather not participate.

After so much time in hospital settings, doctor offices, and treatment rooms, it's a joy to be able to focus on new things. You can make the choice to create your own special list of reasons for hope. You get to show up being who you want to be NOW after treatment even if your body is missing some parts. You get to tap into your creativity in brand new ways! Yes, I said creativity; that's the energy you can use to explore your newly emerging reasons for hope.

How you decide to create your life after cancer diagnosis & treatment is a worthwhile project. Make it on purpose. What do you believe now? What new action are you ready to take? Who is the new emerging you? My way certainly isn't *the* right way, there is no one right way; yet I have had fun stepping into who I am becoming with new hiking sticks and all.

I appreciate the work of e.e. cummings who wrote it like this: "It takes courage to grow into who you are becoming." I offer my example to encourage you to find yours. You get to make it up and you get to forget perfect; good enough is good enough and you'll find a balance that brings you joy every day. Yes you can!

Author: Leslie Gebhart, M.A

Website: [Life Coach Leslie Gebhart](#)

Are you ready to focus on moving ahead with the possibilities? *"The information in Leslie's eBook, Yes after Cancer, got me out of bed. I was able to create a 'to do' list of things that make me happy, and better yet, I even started doing them!" ~ Joseph B.*

In addition to celebrating life after cancer diagnosis, Leslie coaches with a lightness of heart and a touch of whimsy offering products and ideas that make meaningful and thoughtful gifts. You'll find helpful info and inspiring possibilities when you visit her site noted above. "Come on over." she says.

Things Have a Way of Working Out

By Betty Malheiro

I was 23 when I lost my husband of just 15 months to a heart attack!

Having always wanted to be married, I spent many of the following years in self-destructive relationships; all the while knowing they were wrong for me, but not having the emotional strength or courage to end them. When the third one of eight years, which had been mentally and emotionally abusive fell apart, I fell into a state of depression so deep that I didn't care if I lived or died.

I would get myself up, dressed and out to work every day, but right after supper, I'd find myself climbing into bed at 7:30, sleeping straight through to the next morning. Sleep became my salvation and my escape from loneliness.

It was December 11, 1992, a day on which we were expecting to be hit by a major snow storm. Fortunately it stayed above freezing and ended up as just heavy rain.

However, in anticipating the snow that day I had taken the bus to work instead of driving. When the work day was over I set out walking to the bus stop, which was about a mile away. I had walked about a quarter-mile from my office and when I stopped at a traffic light to wait for the light to turn green. The rain was blinding and the wind so strong I was fighting with my umbrella to stay dry.

There were two cars also waiting for the light. When the light in the opposite direction turned yellow, I stepped into the road at the crosswalk as there were no cars coming from the left. With my head tipped slightly to the right so that I could view the oncoming cars as they were about to turn towards me, I began to cross the street.

When the light turned green I saw one of the cars go straight, but the other sat waiting for the first to pass. The next thing I saw was a flash of light straight in front of me. I thought quickly that my time on earth was over, but I said to myself, "No, it's Christmas," and then felt an impact. It all happened so fast.

The next thing I knew, I was picking myself up from underneath the front bumper of a car. The car that struck me did not have the headlights on. The bright light that I saw I honestly believe to this day, my guardian angel . . . perhaps my late husband.

My purse and a large tote bag I was carrying over my left shoulder had provided a cushion which prevented my head from striking the pavement as well as helped soften the impact of my fall.

Slightly dazed, I elected to go to the hospital because my right arm hurt and I couldn't put any pressure on my right leg without it giving way under me.

I managed to get by with a torn ligament in my leg and an injury to my arm which the doctors denied, despite the fact I could not (and still cannot) lift it up over my head when I'm in a prone position, but must slide it down to my side.

By the grace of God, however, and the help of my guardian angel, I had been given a second chance . . . a wake-up call . . . and WAS I ready to listen!

I renewed my faith and began attending Sunday services every week in appreciation and to show my thankfulness at having been given a second chance, knowing however that I would never be able to reciprocate for the gift I had been given.

I decided it was time to, instead of dwelling on the past, on the things I could not change, to begin looking toward the future and concentrate on those I could. I looked forward to getting up each and every day and accepted life's little challenges as an experience of personal growth and inner strength. I gave up my search for a husband and instead set out to discover myself.

I made three lists, one a list of my strengths and weaknesses, the second a list of things I wanted to do and third, a list of things I enjoyed doing. I next took a calendar and scheduled in time every day to do something I thought fun and made a strong effort to stick to it.

It did take a while, but I finally realized I wasn't lonely anymore and that I wasn't using sleep as an escape. I was also happier as I was now looking at life from a positive perspective rather than a negative one.

I also made it a point to smile as often as I could and at everyone I saw. And throughout this entire process, I learned to really like me and my life!

I did try dating again but after experiencing similar situations as previously, I finally gave up on the idea. Instead, rather than getting discouraged, I redirected my energies to learning some new skills (web design, digital graphic design, and writing) which contributed so much to brightening my mood and personality that I actually received a promotion at work back in 1999.

I have to say that my life since then hasn't exactly been uneventful or a piece of cake. I've had my share of life's ups and downs. I found myself unemployed twice (both times with significant salary cuts) in the last 5 years, at ages 56 and 59 respectively, in a job market quite like the current one—unemployment at 7.2 percent.

I also lost almost 4 months salary at the end of last year while on unpaid leave because I was the only one able to take care of my two ill parents, one of whom I came close to losing and the other with dementia.

I'm only 4 years away from retirement, but with the "hit" my retirement savings took as a result of the current economic situation, I will probably have to continue working into my early 70s or even later. I could allow myself to be discouraged . . . but I won't! I know that as bleak as things appear, it will get better.

So try to stop worrying about ALL the things you can't change. It's a complete waste of time and effort, and an aging one at that. Concentrate on those things you can.

As difficult as it may seem or gets, refuse to let yourself become discouraged. Try to avoid looking at things from the negative perspective, but instead *choose* to look at it from a positive perspective, or at least as a temporary setback. Accept your situation as an opportunity for personal growth. Take some classes, learn a new skill, or make plans with friends.

Set your alarm clock for 6:00 A.M., stretch, shower and get dressed. Have a good breakfast and SMILE . . . a lot!

Create a list of what you need to accomplish that day and include something that is fun or relaxing to you and then set out to achieve the items on your list.

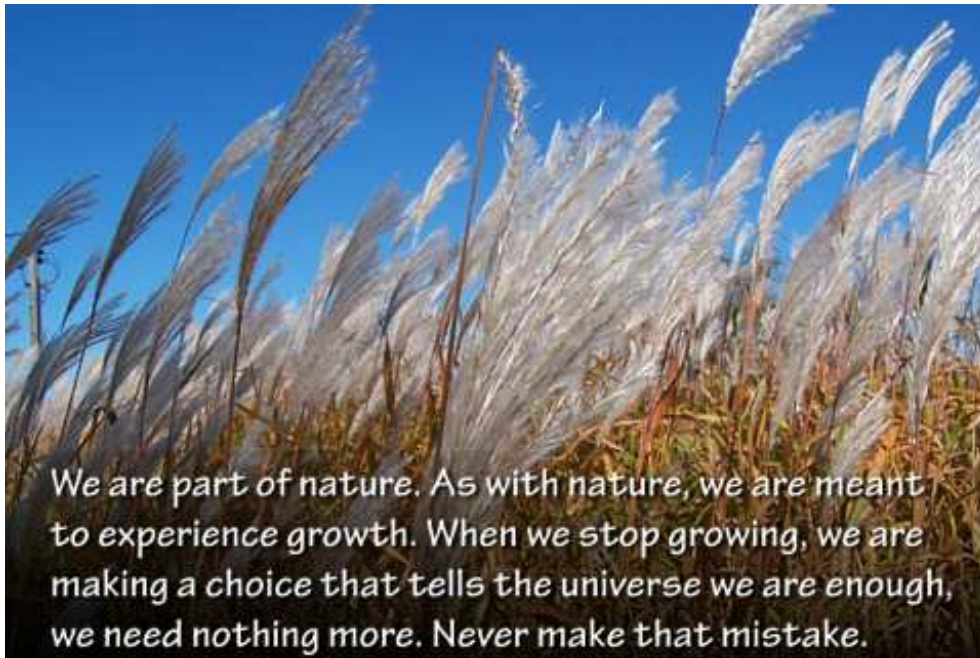
You may not get to all of them, but always make sure you do the one fun thing every day.

In time you'll see, things do have a way of working out.

Author: Betty Malheiro

Website: [Betty's Place](#)

Come to Betty's Place—fun for the **ENTIRE** family! Enjoy pages and pages of holiday fun and games, a game arcade, free electronic postcards, free graphics, a mall and other fine shops for fun family shopping and puzzles galore! Links to my other sites including a Victorian lifestyle study.



Do You Believe in Miracles?

By George McCartney

I'm not thinking of the illuminating, fantastic, angel-in-the-sky, religious miracles. Though they may happen occasionally, they are not common occurrences. There are many forms of miracles: medical and scientific miracles, narrow escapes from death and terminal illness, and many more.

The type of miracle I am thinking of is the phenomenon of human determination, the ability of people to overcome adverse conditions and to improve their lives. These are miracles that occur every day and we rarely notice them.

The United States is peopled mostly by immigrants and their descendents. Think about the immigrant who leaves his native land with just a few possessions to travel thousands of miles to a land where the language and customs are strange, where there are no friends to turn to for help, with no job waiting for them.

They risked everything on a chance to improve their situation. A chance that could possibly fail, yet they took it. Some of these people were trying to get away from oppressive governments or bad economic conditions. Whatever the reason, these were people with great determination.

There are other types of personal determination in the face of adversity. Let me tell you about one situation which, to me, demonstrates great determination. There is a musician, Michael, who lives in the United Kingdom with his wife and young son. He is a classical guitarist of considerable talent accustomed to giving frequent concerts in his local area.

One evening he was washing a dish. The dish broke and one of the shards sliced into a finger on Michael's left hand. Now this may not seem to be very serious. It's just a cut that needs some stitches.

Michael's wife took him to the hospital to have the finger treated. The doctor removed a few small pieces of the dish and cleaned the wound. After closer examination the doctor told Michael that the shard cut so deeply that it severed a tendon in the finger.

This is quite serious. The tendons are cords which pull the muscles causing our limbs, in this case fingers, to bent and move in different ways. They allow us to push buttons, type on keyboards, hold items, grip tools, and many other functions. For a guitarist, they give the ability to press upon the strings of the guitar. By putting pressure on the strings in different locations the guitarist creates the various notes that entertain us.

In Michael's situation, repairing the tendon would require a long and severe operation. There were no guarantees that the repair could be accomplished. It was possible that he would never play the guitar again.

After the operation, Michael went through physical therapy to re-educate the finger muscles and regain the range of motion necessary for fingering the strings. Unfortunately, the range of motion did not return to normal. There was a problem with the tendon. Scar tissue had made it thicker and it wouldn't bend properly.

Another operation was performed to try to scrape away some of the scar tissue. Back to physical therapy and more exercises. After several months the finger had regained only sixty percent of the needed range of motion. The doctor and the physical therapist felt this was the best they could expect. It appeared that Michael's career as a classical guitarist was at an end.

On receiving such news many of us would become angry or depression would set in. We would give up and look for another career. This did not fit Michael's personality. With the encouragement of his wife and six-year old son, Michael worked on his finger. He continued the exercises and pushed his fingers to stretch for the notes he previously played so effortlessly.

His hard work and determination were not in vain. After a year, he returned to the therapist to have the finger checked. He had regained over ninety percent of his original range, enough to play again.

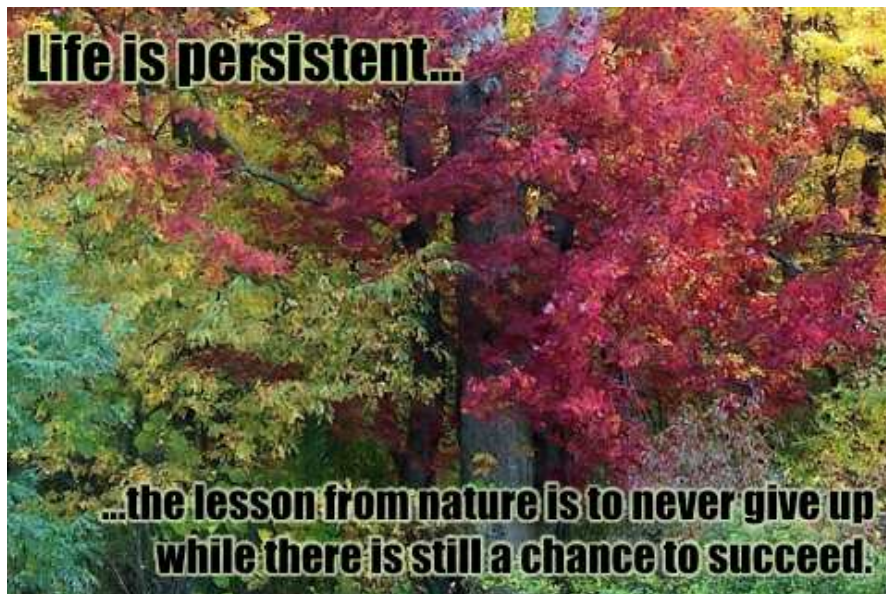
In a few weeks Michael will give his first concert in over eighteen months: eighteen months of hard work and tireless determination. There are several more concerts in the works, all including some very difficult pieces, more difficult than he had played in the past.

This small miracle of determination and hope would not have been possible without the great skills of the surgeon and the therapist who laid the foundation for Michael to continue. Nor would it have been possible without Michael's determination in the face of adversity.

Author: George McCartney

Website: [McCartney's Journeys in Genealogy](#)

Genealogical research pertaining to the family *McCartney* with historical and genealogical articles.



The “Right” Wrong Number

By Rey Carr

Our corporation has had a toll-free telephone number for a number of years. When the line was first installed, the staff reported that they got a number of calls that were for wrong numbers. I asked the staff members answering the phone how we might deal with this phenomenon. Here is the approach we came up with and what has happened as a result.

Rather than just saying "you've got the wrong number," the staff tried to find out what number or organization the person was trying to reach. We now keep a file of the various "wrong number" organizations (typically they have toll-free numbers that are one digit off from ours), and we provide them with the correct number (sort of a Directory Assistance without the charges).

We will also call the "wrong number" organization and let them know what we are doing and ask them if they would do the same for us, should anyone call them looking for our organization.

This request for mutual exchange is not often welcomed at the telephone answer person level, and my staff has reported that more often than not, the person they talk to seems not to care about it...maybe this would have to be discussed at a higher level in their organization in order to develop a "service oriented policy."

This practice has led to at least three interesting outcomes, none of which we anticipated when we started this practice:

A national association printed our number by mistake in their brochure as the number to call to get information about skiing in Quebec. We immediately tracked down the mistake, called the association to tell them, found out the correct number, and let them know we would redirect the calls to the correct number. The association asked us how many of our employees enjoyed skiing, and then sent us season ski passes for two local ski resorts (which just happen to be the best ski resorts in Canada).

On several occasions when callers learn they had connected to the wrong number they expressed curiosity about our corporation. Our staff gives them a

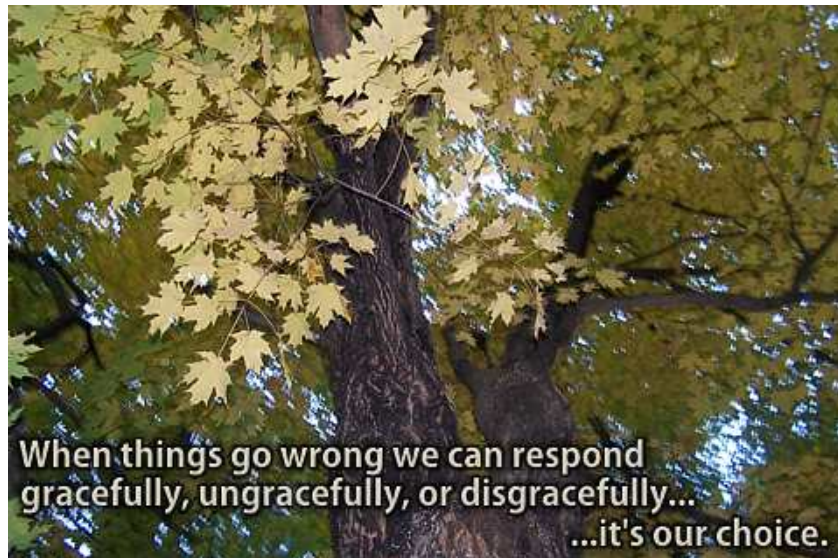
brief overview and offers to send them some literature about our services. On more than one occasion this "mistake" led to a contract for services.

Rather than experiencing the wrong number as an annoying phone call, our staff members typically feel pretty good after such a call, because it provides them an opportunity to be helpful to others. One person even called back (they had to get our number from Directory Assistance) to tell a staff member that they had experienced a more satisfying interaction with our staff (the wrong number) than they had with the company they were originally trying to reach.

Author: Rey Carr

Website: [Peer Resources](#)

If you're considering becoming a coach, or want to start or strengthen a mentoring program, or would like to ensure that students in school have access to positive peer support, then we have the information and tools for you. Find out why more than a million web visitors use the Peer Resources website to obtain up-to-date information, receive customized answers to questions, are 100 percent confident in the recommended resources, or become members of our service-rich network.



The Spirit of Adventure

By Jay Schryer

I'm a huge fan of **Star Trek**. I love the idea of a group of explorers, headed out into the great unknown, "to boldly go where no one has gone before." That spirit of adventure has been a part of the human experience since the dawn of time.

The adventurous spirit is what led our earliest ancestors down from the safety of the trees, and out into the open savanna. It led them to leave Africa, and spread throughout the world. It caused men like Alexander the Great and Genghis Khan to conquer their worlds.

The spirit of adventure and exploration caused a select group of Viking warriors to cross the frozen northern seas in search of trading partners, and it caused a young Portuguese sailor to risk his life and reputation on a dream. Men like Lewis and Clark explored their new world, and blazed a trail. Years later, they were followed by thousands of fortune seekers across the great divide.

The spirit of exploration has led modern man to probe the depths of the oceans and climb the highest mountains. It has caused us to send people to the moon and spacecraft into outer space. And some day, in the not too-distant future, we all hope that we will make the dream of **Star Trek** a reality, and send mankind to explore the universe.

The spirit of exploration is undoubtedly embedded in our very souls. It's part of what makes us human, separate from all the other animals on Earth. For we alone have the capability, and the desire, to move beyond the borders of our territories, of our hunting grounds, and to see what is over that hill, on the other side of those woods, or around that bend in the road ahead.

Why do we do this? For hope. We hope that we will find something useful, something interesting, or just something *different* just beyond our borders. We hope to find that interesting plant, or that beautiful landscape. We hope to find the food that we need, or the fresh water. If nothing else, we find something interesting to talk about with our fellow searchers. The best part is that we

almost always find what we are looking for. Always, we find new knowledge, and that in itself is a precious gift.

And sometimes, when we are extremely lucky, we find something within ourselves. And that possibility, that potential to become greater than we once were, is what drives us ever onwards and upwards as a species. It helps us evolve into a kinder, gentler species than our ancestors were, and brings us closer to the Divine.

Because of this, there is always reason to hope. Hope is the key to our humanity, and our relationship to God.

"Life is either a daring adventure, or nothing." ~Helen Keller

Author: Jay Schryer

Website: [Porsidan](#)

In the course of my thinking, I ask a lot of questions: of myself, of my friends and family, and of the Divine Source itself. I am always questioning things...including reality, my own place in the world, and the meaning of life. My blog is probably a deeper blog than you are likely used to seeing, and I'm happy with that.



The Power of Love

By S. Lorentz

She was one of the unfortunates in life. Off to a bad beginning with her too-young parents involved in screaming rages that seemingly never ended. The ever-present stench of alcohol and horrifying sight of her mother's blood splattered across the living room walls were among her first memories. By the age of just five, she had been abused in every way possible, and with her mother now dead, found her way into yet another foster home.

I had a new foster sister.

Looking back on it now, I can't imagine how much hard, constant work and enduring patience and love it must have taken on the part of the my parents (working alongside therapists and teachers) and this little girl. However, during the three years Sara was with us, she moved from a place of fear, anger and suspicion to trust.

She, in some ways, became a little girl again. The courage of that child was extraordinary, and one day, shortly before she left us for her adoptive home, Sara proved not only her bravery but just how strong her love for my family had grown to be.

One winter day my father took the then eight-year old Sara and our two large dogs out for their daily walk in a fairly secluded area of town. Getting out of the car he cautioned her to be very careful on the icy paths, reminding her of their "emergency plan" (this was in the days before cell phones). If my father was ever to fall and get hurt, Sara would walk to the road and flag down a passing car for help.

He did happen take a hard fall that day and lay unresponsive on the ice. Crying, Sara tried to wake him. The dogs romped in the snow nearby. It was up to Sara to get help, and she did.

She walked the long treacherous path to the side of the highway and waved to drivers, one of whom stopped. In doing this, she saved the life of the only man she'd ever known who had loved her properly and safely, without reservation and always unconditionally. She saved the life of her father and of mine.

Sara had some hard times through her teen years in her adoptive home, but she's doing very well as a young adult now.

I hope she realizes what an utter victory her life has been. I hope she's proud of herself each and every day. I know I am, and of course I'll always be grateful to her and to the power of her love.

Author: S. Lorentz

Website: [Learning Fun for Kids Online](#)

Home school and after school, kids online can access some great sites and games that are both educational and fun. At Learning Fun for Kids Online, Stephanie Olsen reviews and links to the best sites, and also discusses some parenting articles and sites of interest to parents.



Meaning and Purpose

By Lisis M. Blackston

There are very few people I can think of who had *less* reason to be hopeful than World War II prisoners of Nazi concentration camps. One of them was the psychiatrist, Viktor Frankl, who told us in *Man's Search for Meaning*:

"Man is ready and willing to shoulder any suffering as soon and as long as he can see a meaning in it."

Can it *really* be that even the worst suffering imaginable is bearable, if we believe it has a purpose? Let's consider the following five situations:

1. The rigors of climbing a mountain — There is a considerable amount of pain and suffering that goes into serious mountain climbing. They spend time planning, training, conditioning, and acclimating to the various altitude levels so that their vital organs don't cease functioning. They may have to contend with dangerous weather, lack of oxygen, frostbite, and the difficulty of technical climbs. They even have to acknowledge that they may not summit and, in point of fact, may not survive!

Yet, lots of people have climbed mountains and will continue to do so in order to conquer their own limitations, to face a challenge and succeed. That payoff gives meaning and purpose to all of the suffering and sacrifice that precedes reaching the summit.

2. The sacrifices of war — Training for service is incredibly arduous. Combat is potentially horrendous. Soldiers sacrifice their time, their personal comfort, contact with their loved ones, and on too many occasions, their very lives. But they do it willingly to secure the freedom of the people and nation they love. To them, serving that purpose makes the pain and suffering worthwhile.

3. The pain of childbirth — Sometimes, complications can make a pregnancy difficult and painful. When everything goes as planned, there is still labor and delivery to contend with. Even with an epidural, this part is incredibly trying, to say the least. But somehow we get through it, because we *know* it will be worth it when we have our little one to hold and to love. The continuation of life gives meaning to the pain, and so we can bear it.

4. The sorrow of losing a loved one — There are times when death is a long and painful process. Other times it is sudden, unexpected, and gut wrenching. It always leaves a void, an empty spot that cannot be filled by anything or anyone. But death reminds us that life is fragile, and that we should value the time and people we have left. When we learn that life lesson, it can make grief and despair less overwhelming.

5. The challenges of the current economy — Good jobs are scarce, our healthcare system is a costly mess, debts are unbearably high, options are running out, and motivation is at an all time low. It is imperative that we find meaning in our suffering so we will have reasons to hope things will get better. What could possibly be the purpose of this suffering, this crisis, this state of global affairs? I came up with three possibilities:

- The crisis is helping us shift our priorities from consumerism to humanitarianism.
- We are learning to shed all of the unnecessary distractions and luxuries, in order to focus on our loved ones and our relationships.
- We have many opportunities to help others who are in greater need.

If we can try to see some of the good that will ultimately result from our pain, we will find the strength to withstand it. When we are unable to find the reason ourselves, we can trust that there IS a reason for everything that happens. Maybe we just can't see what it is yet.

Author: Lisis M. Blackston
Website: [Quest for Balance](#)

Whether we find happiness through grand adventures, or seek it in every-day places, we all want less pain and more joy. Quest for Balance is a place where people can be reminded that finding lasting happiness and inner peace is not only achievable, but surprisingly simple for all of us!

When Dr. Death Comes Knockin', Call In the Prayer Posse

By Ken Farrish

The odds are insurmountable. You, and every other human being are going to deal with it sooner or later. What to do when Dr. Death comes knockin' on the family door?

My kindred-spirit kid brother has just faced the daunting challenge of undergoing a quadruple bypass via open heart surgery. In anxiety-filled days leading up to the operation, our fact finding showed this is now a fairly standard process, with success resulting in 97% of cases.

Sure it is a serious procedure, but over 24,000 such operations are now performed each year. And in my Bro's case the alternative of not having said surgery was a far greater risk. But like so many other learning opportunities in life, these were all just words...until the reality hit. What if he happens to land within the other 3%?

To say yours truly was worried would be one big-time understatement. This ol' dude was downright scared. I felt so helpless. It brought back vivid memories of another time I experienced similar frightening feelings - when my wife had a brain aneurysm.

Like then, reality hit me like a velvet hammer. Things were entirely in the hands of doctors, and there was not one single thing that I, or others, could do to make things better. It was debilitating, and ever so humbling. But as was the case during my wife's delicate operation, the universe began to deliver its own unique method of support.

As word of my Bro's predicament traversed the airwaves, a formerly invisible Prayer Posse quickly assembled. E-mails and phone calls started pouring in for him from an intriguing cross-section of humanity. Hockey players, party pals, past bosses & employees, current co-workers, school buds, home-towners, old roommates, family members, and a whole host of others sent him support in their own way and words.

They offered "wish you the best", "you can do it", "rootin' for ya", "our thoughts are with you", "sending you good energy", "our prayers are with you", and much more. Tears welled in an old man's eyes, and hope in his heart.

After dropping Bro off at the hospital, the next five long hours seemed surreal. My mind incessantly wandered as I bounced from one busy-work activity to another, all the while waiting for "that" phone call. When it came, I heard four of the most delightful and relieving words one can hear from a doctor: "the operation went well".

I immediately rushed up to be by his bedside, only to find him on what looked to me like total life support. He had tubes going in and out of various body parts, lights and dials were flashing on at least eight different screens, he was lifeless, and worst of all not even snoring (one of his well-known traits). "It is still a very critical period", warned the nurse.

But my second visit, four hours later, delivered positive proof that all was well. He overheard my voice when I entered, and in a raspy growl (with a wee hint of brotherly love) blurted to his nurse "Don't let that guy in here". It was one of the sweetest greetings I can ever remember.

As we joked and reminisced, a comforting thought kept reoccurring - he was not alone through this challenging time after all, his Prayer Posse was by his side. May you be so fortunate.

Author: Ken Farrish

Website: [BC Building Info](#)

Ken publishes a free e-mail newsletter and website for the British Columbia home building industry. Given that he doesn't really know a lot, but knows a lot of people who know a lot, Ken's newsletter and site provide links to good online information and resources on home building.

Reasons for Hope

By Eugene F. O'Neill

The American people can and will rise to whatever challenge we must face. We have faced trials before; our history shows that our resilience and faith in times of trouble is strengthened. This can be faith in the creator, faith in our country, but mostly faith in yourself. The will or desire to grow, learn, create, and do is strong in us. We will come through it stronger and with more ambition to make our dreams and goals happen.

It has been said, we could have another full depression. The set of events that caused the depression of the 30's is very unlikely. The financial depression was compounded by the multi-year drought we called the dust bowl. Somewhere I read it was the worst drought in 300 years. The dust bowl caused the collapse of agriculture in the Great Plains for all of North America. Now we have irrigation techniques that when combined with no-till and low till farming can help mitigate the effects of drought.

A full "depression" is not happening now!

Our nations and people are completely different now. We have access to more knowledge than at any other time. The freeway system means we can ship a thousand pounds of freight per truck from Kansas to California in 2 1/2 days.

It would have taken much longer even by railroad in the 30's to move freight. In 6 days we can ship or import thousands of truckloads of freight from across the sea. We can transmit information around the world in 2 seconds. We live in a different time.

Shall we take a look at the facts? There have been 12 recessions since the 30's; none has lasted more than 18 months. I knew this downturn or recession was coming maybe 2 or 3 years ago. Anytime real estate gains more than 7 to 10 % in value in one year, you can figure it is going to correct sometime. When prices go up the construction booms, then when things slow down there are too many empty houses and lots on the market.

Although things in general are slow, there are positive aspects to this recession, for example. There are more houses in my price range than last year. Fuel is

back down to a reasonable level for now at least. We just have to ride it out, pull the belt up a notch so to speak.

Are you feeling powerless in this economic climate? To get some ideas on cost cutting read *The Tightwad Gazette* by Amy Dacyczyn (men too). You will be amazed at where your money actually goes. Track every expenditure for one quarter (3 months). You only have to record cash transactions, your bank or credit card company will record the rest for you.

Surprise surprise, look at all the discretionary spending. If you take positive action in your life, you will be, and will feel, more in control of your life and finances. Figure out what is needed and wanted, and then make a specific plan to achieve your goals.

Do not pay attention to the doomsayers; it is common for us as a society to carry the fear too far. Separate yourself from it, all this negative talk is not helping. If the news brings you down, don't watch it. Watch a comedy or listen to soft music. Spend some good quality time with your family.

By spending some of your time helping others, you will give them hope, and you will feel hope too. Smile at a stranger, make their day. Help a neighbor or volunteer with a local charity or senior group. Hold a neighborhood food drive and give to your local food bank. Demand on food banks is at a very high level; even one can of soup helps someone. As local governments cut back on services your community will need you. Most people who do serve find it very rewarding.

As much as we have advanced, it is only the beginning. I believe we are on the verge of the greatest scientific, medical and industrial advances in our history. We live in the **BEST** time of our history. I'm happy to live in this time.

Author: Eugene O'Neill

Website: [Herdin' Dirt](#)

Eugene didn't include any text for the author's box with his story.

Journey of Hope & Healing: How I Made Peace with this New-Old Me

By Sandra Linley

I'd like you to meet the new me—and the old me. We get along okay together, although that was not always the case...

Our story began on a crisp, clear January afternoon, twelve years ago. I was headed home, having dropped off my daughter at a birthday party. As I waited at a light, a sudden bang made me look left. Sweeping straight toward me was a wall of white. The out-of-control FedEx van slammed into my car door, and with the wrenching impact, a new me was born.

Following the accident, my cuts, bruises and broken ribs healed quickly. However, my whipsawed brain did not. I was brain injured—and different.

The new me looked just like the old, but similarity ended there. The familiar *old* me was calm, relaxed, and easy-going. The *new* me was touchy and unpredictable, given to mood swings and towering rages. The *old* me loved reading, learning, the life of the mind; the *new* me forswore novels (not being able to keep the characters straight), put dirty clothes in the dishwasher, and struggled to relearn how to use a phone. The *old* me was no paragon—except in comparison to this easily fatigued, confused, forgetful, wholly inadequate and scary new person.

Tigger's Trauma

In the gloom following the accident, well-meaning friends tried to cheer me by noting that worse could have happened: I might have ended up disfigured, in a wheelchair, or minus an arm or leg. In comparison to those obvious physical losses, my only lasting injury was invisible. Pain-free.

Yet, I'd lost who I was.

It was a dilemma Tigger, the tiger in Winnie the Pooh, would have appreciated. In one episode he lost his stripes and thus became

unrecognizable, even to himself. Tigger grew depressed, wondering *if he wasn't Tigger, then who was he?*

In Tigger's case, Pooh saved the day. He recognized his friend because “he was still Tigger on the inside,” and the stripes magically reappeared.

Happy ending aside, it was my situation. As I wrote at the time:

Lucky Tigger. I empathize with him, because I too wrestle with self-doubt.

In my case, the identity crisis was triggered by a head injury, which in subtle and not so subtle ways altered how I think, remember, even feel.

Unfortunately, my changes **are** on the inside. And, unlike Tigger's stripes, my old abilities won't magically reappear one morning. So this is me now, and I must—however reluctantly—reach an accommodation with this new-old self.

I wish the changes gone. But they are there, and I must absorb them. Accept them as me. How else can I learn strategies for coping with deficiencies? How else learn to play to my strengths and not to my weaknesses? How else can I plan? How else can I find any peace?

So I go to rehab and I probe. I sift, sort, count, add, build, react, scan, type, memorize, and problem-solve. I take notes and set timers. I fail. I withdraw in grief, anger, frustration, self-pity. Then, because I must, I try again.

Building skill and rebuilding a sense of self.

Because I will make peace with this new-old me.

Seeking Peace

This quest for peace would absorb the next decade of my life.

It began as a mission to be “cured” of my brain injury so that I would again feel as I used to feel and think as I used to think. I scoured the Internet for information, sought advice from other brain injury survivors, and visited innumerable doctors—neurologists, neuropsychologists, naturopaths,

acupuncturists, and herbalists. But no drug regimen, treatment or therapy succeeded in banishing the new me. Brain fog, fatigue, headaches, depression and volatility haunted me still.

Finally, no miracle having appeared, I finally began to wonder if I could never, ever go back, how I could live with this new-old me. I was ready to move forward.

At this point, my focus changed. No longer seeking a cure, I sought healing instead. **Peace.** For me, this involved:

- Learning to value myself for what truly matters—qualities like spirit, honesty and compassion and how I live my life—and to forgive my awkwardness and imperfections.
- Accepting, even loving myself as I am, complete with intellectual and emotional shortcomings—without giving up hope for improvement.
- Living in the now, savoring the present, rather than dwelling on past losses or fixating on future hopes.
- And, above all, finding within the heartbreak of brain injury, a silver lining to treasure—some good that this injury has brought into my life.

Finding the Good

- Once I started looking for the good stemming from my brain injury, it wasn't hard to find.

Some good things were gifts. Following the accident, my cat-loving husband overcame a lifelong fear of dogs to get me one, because he felt I needed the animal's nonjudgmental love and acceptance. Our household is now enlivened by two dogs, as well as a cat (and it would be difficult to say who enjoys them more, my husband or me!).

Others I made happen. Post-injury, I quit taking my own and others' health for granted. I now exercise more, eat better, and I live with greater awareness and appreciation. I also am more self-accepting, not defining myself by intellectual qualities or beating myself up over what I can't (yet) control. I've learned to ask for help when I need it. And I've found ways to reach out to others who

struggle, contributing to survivor forums and volunteering in a brain injury rehab program.

But the greatest good of all was a team effort. Frustrated at being unable to find items to improve my life post-bonk, my husband was inspired to develop such a resource. With my sister, her husband and me enthusiastically joining in, B Independent, Inc. was launched. *Our mission?* To make daily living aids available to brain injury survivors, their families and caregivers. This year we celebrate our tenth year online, having morphed to serve a larger community of disabled, elderly, even fit folk. For each of those years, B Independent has also given my life passion and purpose.

Making Peace

The sun was shining twelve years ago when I climbed into my car to head home. Little did I suspect what waited down the road.

The journey from that day to now has been agonizing, yet also amazing. It has been a journey of healing and hope. Granted, the old me is gone, or at least much altered. But the new me has changed as well—no longer am I the lost and terrified soul I was right after the accident.

These days my thinking rarely runs to *old* versus *new*. This new-old me, well that's just me now. To quote Popeye the Sailor, "I yam what I yam and that's all what I am."

I have made peace.

Author: Sandra Linley

Website: [B Independent](http://www.bindependent.com)

Ever wish life were a little easier? *Make it so* with helpful gadgets from B Independent! Our products are easier to see, easier to use, and life-simplifying. Whether you're looking for a timer that reminds in your own voice, a grocery-list maker that records, organizes, and prints out your shopping list, or an automated medication dispenser that will call your cell with a reminder if you miss your medications, you'll find it all right here.

And if you enjoyed "New-Old Me" I invite you to read "Stranger in my Place" and other musings at <http://www.bindependent.com/poems.htm>.

The Adventure of ‘Yes’

By Ken Farrish

I have dreamed of it for years, but never ever thought it would actually happen. And all because of learning to say . . . **YES**.

There, live on stage, fulfilling his life-long dream, was an ol’ grey-haired, air guitar wannabe—yours truly. With a well-worn electric axe swinging wildly (kind of) by his side, his hips and body gyrated (by his standards) almost to the beat of *I Love Rock & Roll*.

Huge speakers blared out the beat, and flash bulbs popped incessantly as the audience screamed and yelled. To top it all off, the spectacle was recorded live, and a poster was produced, capturing the prowess of this hard-rocking group in action. This previously pretend-only air guitar dude was living out his fantasy of playing in a band. Just because of . . . **YES**.

You see, in the past, “yes” was not my first response when asked to do something that might be seen by others as a little foolish. My ego would always instruct me to back off. Then I would make some phony excuse not to participate, knowing deep down inside that it was really because I was worried what others might think.

But over the last couple of decades, things somehow changed. I have our youth to thank for my evolution. First, I was blessed by the journey of parenting our own wonderfully high-spirited daughter and lively, live-in-the-moment son. Then I got to hang out with various young-uns from within our close circle of friends, in Scouts, at the *Take a Hike* school program, and in our community.

In each of these encounters the youth kept coming up with off-the-wall ideas (to adults) about how to have some fun. Thankfully, somewhere along the line, I found myself starting to say . . . **YES**. That’s when magic started to happen.

On came the cool activities and adventures such as cliff diving, snow caving, high ropes courses, and totally un-planned trips, hikes, and camps. I’ve danced, sang, acted, and played a pile of kids’ games. And many times I’ve talked, listened, learned, laughed and cried as youth shared their stories and

opinions. Reflecting on these past experiences, I realize how lucky I am to have had such opportunities. But let's get back to our tale of the rock & roll band.

Now before you run out to buy our DVD, hit me up for discounted tickets to our next gig, or want a poster (I did buy ten copies for my mother), I must put this magnanimous event into perspective. It evolved when my son & I recently visited young friends in Seattle, and they suggested we tour a place called the *Experience Music Project*. Not only did this neat place have incredible displays of musicians, musical events, and instruments, there was a really cool recording studio.

Naturally, the uninhibited suggested we record a video. My first thought, as usual, was: "Oh, I don't know if we should."

But then, as if guided by some strange force, I heard the now more familiar word come out of my mouth . . . **YES**.

The stage was already set up with full band equipment, sound system, pre-recorded music, taped audience screams, and lots of flashing lights. So all we had to do was show up and pretend we knew what we were doing. And did we ever—what a blast!

Later on, we proudly shared our video and poster with every friend and relative who was willing to sit through it. Each time when doing so, for just one wee, miniscule moment, I tend to think of how weird this ol' grey-hair looks swaying about while proudly pounding on his guitar. But then as I look at the spark in his eyes, and the big smile on his face, and all I can think about is how much fun I had, shortly after saying . . . **YES**.

Author: Ken Farrish

Website: [BC Building Info](#)

Ken publishes a free e-mail newsletter and website for the British Columbia home building industry. Given that he doesn't really know a lot, but knows a lot of people who know a lot, Ken's newsletter and site provide links to good online information and resources on home building.

The World at your Finger Tips

By Chick Jabre

The economy is down, prices are up. The newspapers and TV are full of wars and plagues around the world. It is even rainy and gloomy outside. But you are one of the luckiest people in history!

Why?

With a click of a key, you can go anywhere or anyplace. The computer you are using is the most incredible device in history.

While sitting at my computer desk I can click on and see the weather on top of Mount Washington or look out over New York City from the top of the Empire State Building. Maybe I want to see some place warm like the beaches of Cancun or Bermuda, or the breathtaking scenery of Hawaii. (We might not be able to go there, but we still can view it.)

Maybe I want to visit the Louvre Museum in Paris or Sistine Chapel in Rome (really in the Vatican). Just type in the search bar and find the website. Whether I am viewing the Mona Lisa or gazing at the painting on the ceiling by Michelangelo—I have thousands of museums at my command.

If my child needs info for a report in the morning and the library is closed, no problem. With the computer, I just Google in the subject and I have it.

The radio station keeps playing the same old top boring music. I just turn it off and turn up my speaker and search the internet for music. I can listen to the Africa beats like Kwassa Kwassa, Fuji, or Benga. I can listen to the techno sounds of Europe with names of acid tench, wonky, and ghattotech, or the wails of Syrian, Egyptian, Palestinian artists in the Middle East, or chants from a faraway monastery. I can listen to music in thousands of languages—I can't understand the words but the music moves me.

Do you feel like playing a game of chess, checkers, monopoly, or World of Warcraft? Any type of game is out there with people wanting to play you, and at any time of the day or night.

Need a cooking recipe? How to cook a turkey? How about eels? Maybe you need a recipe for Yak. Cooks and chefs are at your wishes to help you.

Are you missing a book from a series you are reading? E-bay and on-line book stores are there to help you find it.

Do you want to know about the policies of your local government? Just head to their website. Want to see if your view about a new candidate matches others? It's all there. You will get a slew of info, good and bad.

I have just scratched the surface of what this wonderful machine can do. I am so thankful that I am living now. We are living with the greatest device for information in history.

Author: Chick Jabre

Website: [The World at your Finger Tips](#)

Chick J at Information Offerings



The Two Spells of Nausea that Changed my Life

By David Cain

There were two poignant moments in my past, twenty-two years apart, that redefined my approach towards life.

The first was just a hint, an early clue that somewhere within me was a reservoir of incredible personal strength. It didn't change me immediately, but something about it stuck with me like no other childhood memory.

The second one blew the doors wide open.

The initial hint came in pre-school. Memories, especially those from very early childhood, fade so quickly and completely that I can remember only a few precious scraps of my small-town preschool experience. But this one is quite clear.

During playtime one afternoon, I found myself feeling physically awful. Dizzy, lightheaded, and irritable, like I had to throw up but couldn't. I needed to get away from the light and the noise of the play area. So I hid myself between the hanging coats and the musty dress-up chest at the back of the room.

In the darkness, I closed my eyes, and commenced feeling sorry for myself. I wanted so badly to go home. I wanted my mom. I remember it seeming like forever (it was probably like, eight minutes) before they found me and ushered me back into whatever game they were playing. The teacher downplayed my misery, the way adults sometimes do with kids when they want them to cheer up, and while I felt a little better, I still had this consuming sense of *woe* that persisted until home time.

When my mom came to get me I was relieved, but still feeling lousy and whiny. As the teacher talked to her about my earlier antics, I was visited by a miracle.

A little girl came up to me and handed me a piece of construction paper, upon which dried beans had been glued to form the shape of a perfect, symmetrical heart. Its flawlessness was uncanny; to this day I have no idea how a four-

year-old could do that. And she gave it to *me*. Suddenly I was dizzy with euphoria, and I could not imagine ever having felt bad at all. I was stunned how that act of kindness seemed to obliterate, in that instant, all the bad feelings, like they were never even real.

"How do you feel now?" my mom asked.

I don't remember exactly what I said, but I have a pretty good idea.

The other miraculous incident, much more recent, affected me even more deeply.

It was January 4th, 2007, the day of my sister's wedding. Thirty-six friends and relatives of the happy couple flew down to an all-inclusive resort on the Mayan Riviera for a week to attend the ocean side ceremony.

Much of the week leading up consisted of copious eating and drinking, and somewhere along the way I guess I ate a bad tamale or something. I woke up, the night of the 2nd, with searing stomach pain. I spent the next two days mostly writhing in bed and evacuating my digestive system's contents through its many channels. The pain was non-stop, and it took my body for a terrible ride. I had never been that sick.

I began to feel awful on many overlapping levels. Aside from my quite serious physical distress, I was jealous that I was missing out on the fun, I was angry that I had somehow made myself sick in the first place, and I was resentful that I had even been dragged down to this scorching country that always seems to make me throw up. I had very little perspective at the time; I would later remember the trip with profound fondness, but at that time I was, unarguably, in Hell.

When the big day came, my illness seemed to be peak, as did my miserable mood. I whined and complained through a lunch with my parents, went and threw up some more, and in the late afternoon went to their hotel room to get ready.

Most of you have experienced -- maybe several times -- that tense twenty minutes before a close family member's wedding, when your whole soul is praying for everything to go right. You double check the camera batteries, you pick loose threads off your blazer, you make 110% sure you have the gift

envelope right where you won't forget it...and *that* was right when my malady really kicked in. I could barely stand without feeling the need to heave.

The thought of just walking out to the beach, let alone sitting politely through the ceremony, seemed impossible to me. I don't remember if I said it aloud or just portrayed it through my expression of dread, but began to wonder if I could even make it at all. Perhaps I could stand near a bush at the edge of the beach in case I suddenly needed to expel something. That would be the best I could do. I couldn't imagine sitting in the front row with my parents.

Wrapped up in my own little world of suffering, I had forgotten that I was not the only one with problems. I'd forgotten, for example, that my father had timed his chemotherapy treatments so that he would be well enough to travel to Mexico that week.

He seemed to know what I was thinking, and he sat down on the bed across from me.

"David, we know you're sick, and I'm sorry. I know it's awful. I've been sick for five years. Some days are not so good, but that doesn't matter, because no matter how I feel physically, I know that I always get to choose my attitude. Every day. And that makes all the difference, that's why I'm still here. I wasn't sure if I'd even have five years, but today I get to see my daughter get married. It's mind over matter, it really works. Let's get ready to go."

Immediately I felt ashamed that I had been so self-absorbed. I bucked up, checked myself in the mirror, and the three of us headed out to the path to the beach. At some point along the way, I noticed something amazing had happened. My nausea, headache, and stomach rot had vanished. I felt fine. I couldn't detect a trace of the poisonous feeling that had consumed me for three days.

I sat in the front row, and the ceremony was beautiful. And I felt great.

Of course none of us ever *want* to suffer, but our mindset carries such an immense influence over our body, that we often make things a lot harder on ourselves. A negative attitude conspires with your body to hurt you, or even kill you, and a positive attitude can actually give you physical fortitude you would not otherwise have.

My illness, as intense as it was, was the type that would be gone in a few days. But the positive attitude remained, and soon became habit.

Nearly two years later, I shared this story during my father's eulogy.

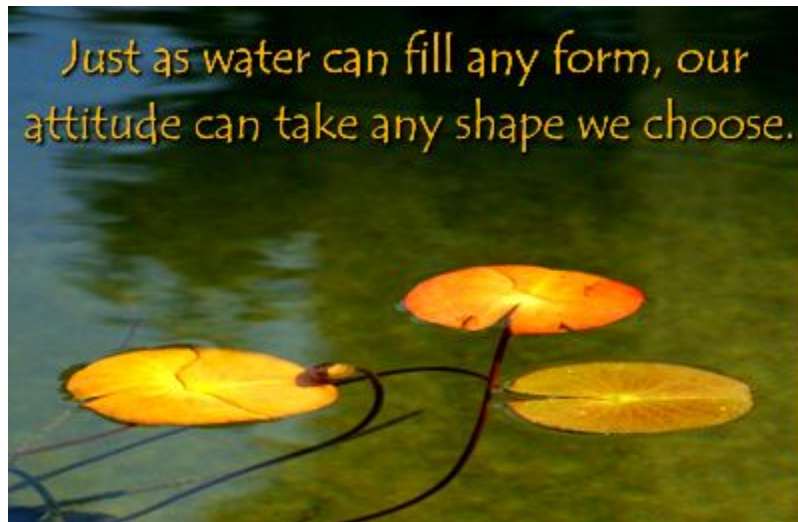
It was not until I was up there at the lectern that I noticed how markedly I had changed since that day. I was calmer, wiser, and less reactive. I stopped complaining, stopped resenting. I see now that one's attitude carries all the power anyone could ever need.

Both of those incidents made me realize that circumstances don't really determine how you feel. They just give you something to respond to. Now, no matter what, I always know how to respond. And that makes all the difference.

Author: David Cain

Website: [Raptitude](#)

Raptitude is a blog for helping each other to enjoy being human. Happiness is a skillset, not a commodity, and Raptitude is where you can learn those skills and celebrate what it means to be a living, breathing human. We're having a blast, come and see.



On Losing a Great Mentor

By Ken Farrish

It's true; we don't know what we've got until we lose it. And I'm learning this first hand as I'm about to lose (almost) one of my greatest mentors. This man has, more than any other person, taught me about some of the most important things in life.

From him I have learned valuable lessons in honesty, openness, love, courage, commitment, holding people able, and the results of a positive attitude. He has unknowingly provided living proof that regardless of the challenges we may face, life still has lots of opportunities if we are real, live for today, and make the best of what we have.

In spite of what some might call disabilities (a term he doesn't even relate to, let alone lean on), this guy has become not only totally self-sufficient, but a contributing member of society. As I look back on our years together I think of the many times I have benefited from watching him deal with life.

Etched vividly in my mind are the tears of joy his Mom & I shed as we watched him wobbly ride his first bike, something that at one time we thought might never be possible. This was a real lesson in not putting my limitations on other people by assuming what they are, or are not, capable of doing. Simply hold them able to do their best.

Growing up, he experienced his fair (?) share of taunting and bullying, and I painfully observed him courageously handle these challenges, without anger or violence. It made me aware of how often we are unkind to others and taught me to be much more sensitive to other people's situations and feelings.

His honesty and openness just come natural to him, and therefore he expects the same from others. Many times I trembled as he pressed for an answer to a tender question or stated an obvious point, much to the chagrin of us self-conscious adults around him who were doing nothing but dancing around the real issue.

Although not known for his physical prowess by his Scouting friends, they surprisingly (again, to me) named him "Computer Brain" because of his

excellent memory, knowledge of details, and spelling skills. To this day he is a faster and better spell checker than my word processing program.

He has schooled me in the meeting of commitments and focusing on goals. No matter what the task, he eventually completes it to the best of his ability, and with a positive attitude. Some may say that this is not the case about his bedroom, but it's *his* bedroom—so there!

After 4 years of hard work this young dude, when he was presented with his Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award, got to personally shake hands with Prince Phillip. He earned this award by completing a number of community activities and personal challenges, including a weeklong hike in the mountains while wearing an air cast on a badly sprained ankle, all without a single complaint.

He is a stickler for being on time and paying attention to detail, always reminding me of my day's appointments and to-do list after his inspection of my day timer.

At his Safeway job, where he is genuinely respected by both staff and customers, he is counted on by his fellow workers to know everyone's work hours, what rules they are supposed to be following, and where things can be found.

He has taught me that it is quite OK, at least as far as he and I are concerned, to publicly display emotion and affection, even for men. This is a result of such things as him nonchalantly saying "I love you" to me in the middle of a crowded elevator, or laying a big hug on me no matter who is around.

More because of him than anything else I am convinced, absolutely, that each and every person has some very special skill or talent that they bring to the table. One of the best motivational sayings I've ever heard came from one of his outdoor camps where they had the theme:

What's right with me is the starting point, what's wrong with me is beside the point.

Now, after 23 years of mentoring me, this young man is moving out, and into his own apartment.

As you can probably guess from these comments, I'm going to miss him big time. I consider myself one of the luckiest people on earth for having had the opportunity of growing up with a very special son.

Author: Ken Farrish

Website: [BC Building Info](#)

Ken publishes a free e-mail newsletter and website for the British Columbia home building industry. Given that he doesn't really know a lot, but knows a lot of people who know a lot, Ken's newsletter and site provide links to good online information and resources on home building.

Our life is made more colorful when we
are able to value each unique individual
and all the wondrous
forms of life this
glorious Universe
has given us.



River of Dreams

By Dennis Gaskill

I was reflecting on my youth recently, and on some of the things I thought I wanted to do with my life back then. In my river of teen dreams I wanted to be rock star, own my own business, be an artist, be the mayor of my town, be a writer, be a baseball player, be an actor—and that was just the beginning.

I was young and thought I could do it all. Of course, at the time I didn't realize the work and dedication it would take to become truly successful at any one of these endeavors, let alone all of them.

Times were hard when I was young, but my river of dreams kept my head above the waters of hopelessness when nothing else was good.

As I floated along on my river of dreams, some hopes naturally fell off my life raft and sunk out of sight. I became only a fair guitar player, and my asthma made me cough when I'd sing, so that one was deep-sixed. I grew to dislike politics, intensely, so I tied a rock to that one and tossed it overboard. I threw my arm out pitching so I downgraded that dream to recreational softball and quenched my athletic thirst that way.

But other dreams did become a reality. I worked as an artist for a while, I own my own business, and I am a writer.

Life is a funny thing sometimes. Of all of my early aspirations, becoming a writer was the one thing I had the least interest in. I'm not even sure why it was on my list, but now it's what I enjoy the most.

As I look back, I spent a lot of my early years working dead end jobs and living for my time off. I didn't care a lot about money or nice things, so I set my dreams aside to just do things. I craved new experiences. I was always one to try new things, usually the first in my circle of friends to "go for it" concerning the new and untried.

As long as I had enough to eat and live on, I thought I was doing well enough. My aspirations had somehow been forgotten, and for years I didn't think I could do any better than I was doing. I accepted my fate, but...

It was all those experiences that helped me to become a writer by giving me a broader view of life and the world. It's almost like I had a destiny I didn't know, but some unseen guiding hand was busy preparing me for it.

When I was young I suffered much, and overcame much. I hated it then, but I wouldn't trade it away now. It helped shape who I am today. It helped bring my dreams back to me even after I'd given up on them.

Never let anyone kill your dreams. Mine kept me alive, and they never abandoned me even though I had forgotten about them for many years.

To be sure, time will show you some of your dreams aren't what you really want after all, or are just not meant to be, but the best ones can come true. They have for me, and I'm no more special than you are. **Trust me on that, we're all equal in the eyes of the Universe.**

At some point though, you have to jump into the water and try to swim. To keep floating endlessly on your life raft down your river of dreams means you'll never reach the shoreline of your best possible destiny. After all, the best angle to reach the shoreline of your dreams is the TRY-angle.

Trust your instincts. Trust your intelligence. You'll face the challenges of making your dreams come true with the same courage, strength, and smarts that got you this far. The only thing to fear is not believing in *any* dream enough to give it a try. Choose a dream and turn it into a goal. Wishing won't make it so, but working toward just may.

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Hope Quotes

The can be a world of wisdom in the apt quotation. I hope you enjoy this small collection of quotations about hope.

Hope is that thing with feathers that perches in the soul and sings the tune without the words and never stops...at all.

— *Emily Dickinson*

Hope is but the dream of those who wake.

— *Matthew Prior*

Most of the important things in the world have been accomplished by people who have kept on trying when there seemed to be no hope at all.

— *Dale Carnegie*

All the great spiritual leaders in history were people of hope. Abraham, Moses, Ruth, Mary, Jesus, Rumi, Gandhi, and Dorothy Day all lived with a promise in their hearts that guided them toward the future without the need to know exactly what it would look like. Let's live with hope.

— *Henri J. M. Nouwen*

Hope, though sometimes false, makes the journey more agreeable.

— *Dennis Gaskill*

Hope is a dream not yet realized.

— Alice G. Ruddy

Far away there in the sunshine are my highest aspirations. I may not reach them but I can look up and see their beauty, believe in them, and try to follow them.

— Louisa May Alcott

Those who wish to sing always find a song.

— Unknown

Listen to the Exhortation of the Dawn!
Look to this Day!
For it is Life, the very Life of Life.
In its brief course lie all the
Verities and Realities of your Existence.
The Bliss of Growth,
The Glory of Action,
The Splendor of Beauty;
For Yesterday is but a Dream,
And To-morrow is only a Vision;
But To-day well lived makes
Every Yesterday a Dream of Happiness,
And every Tomorrow a Vision of Hope.
Look well therefore to this Day!
Such is the Salutation of the Dawn!

— Kalidasa

The future belongs to those who give the next generation reason for hope.

— Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

The natural flights of the human mind are not from pleasure to pleasure but from hope to hope.

— *Samuel Johnson*

If you lose hope, somehow you lose the vitality that keeps life moving, you lose that courage to be, that quality that helps you go on in spite of it all. And so today I still have a dream.

— *Martin Luther King, Jr.*

You must not lose faith in humanity. Humanity is an ocean; if a few drops of the ocean are dirty, the ocean does not become dirty.

— *Mohandas K. Gandhi*

The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.

— *Winston Churchill*

Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow.

— *Albert Einstein*

In all things it is better to hope than to despair.

— *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*

What oxygen is to the lungs, such is hope to the meaning of life.

— *Emil Brunner*

The very least you can do in your life is to figure out what you hope for. And the most you can do is live inside that hope. Not admire it from a distance but live right in it, under its roof.

— *Barbara Kingsolver*

Nothing worth doing is completed in our lifetime,
Therefore, we are saved by hope.
Nothing true or beautiful or good makes complete sense
in any immediate context of history;
Therefore, we are saved by faith.
Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished
alone.
Therefore, we are saved by love.
No virtuous act is quite a virtuous from the standpoint
of our friend or foe as from our own;
Therefore, we are saved by the final form of love which
is forgiveness.

— *Reinhold Niebuhr*

I steer my bark with hope in the head, leaving fear astern. My hopes indeed sometimes fail, but not oftener than the forebodings of the gloomy.

— *Thomas Jefferson*

we must accept finite disappointment, but we must never lose infinite hope.

— *Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Hope, like the gleaming taper's light,
Adorns and cheers our way;
And still, as darker grows the night,
Emits a brighter ray.

— *Oliver Goldsmith*

To travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive.

— *Robert Louis Stevenson*

We judge a man's wisdom by his hope.

— *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Hope is a waking dream.

— *Aristotle*

We should not let our fears hold us back from pursuing our hopes.

— *John F. Kennedy*

In the midst of winter, I found there was, within me, an invincible summer.

— *Albert Camus*

When the world says, "Give up," it is hope that whispers, "Try it one more time." Hope is a friend filled with encouragement.

— *Unknown*

Every child comes with the message that God is not yet discouraged of man.

— Rabindranath Tagore

Consult not your fears but your hopes and dreams. Think not about your frustrations, but about your unfulfilled potential. Concern yourself not with what you tried and failed in, but with what is still possible for you to do.

— Pope John XXIII

Practice hope. As hopefulness becomes a habit, you can achieve a permanently happy spirit.

— Norman Vincent Peale

Expect to have hope rekindled. Expect your prayers to be answered in wondrous ways. The dry seasons in life do not last. The spring rains will come again.

— Sarah Ban Breathnach

He who does not hope to win has already lost.

— Jose' Joaquin Olmedo

Your hopes, dreams and aspirations are legitimate. They are trying to take you airborne, above the clouds, above the storms, if you only let them.

— William James

Everything that is done in the world is done by hope.

— *Martin Luther*

Great hopes make great men.

— *Thomas Fuller*

Once you choose hope, anything's possible.

— *Christopher Reeve*

To have hope is to risk having your dreams shattered; to have no hope is to have no dreams.

— *Dennis Gaskill*

It is characteristic of genius to be hopeful and aspiring.

— *Harriet Martineau*

Hope is the energy that transforms dreams into reality.

— *Dennis Gaskill*

without hope men are only half alive. with hope they dream and think and work.

— *Charles Sawyer*

Hope is a song sung by your soul and heard with your heart.

— *Dennis Gaskill*

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- Be creative and think of something no one else has!

Whoever is fortunate enough to have you share it with them will appreciate what you've done for them. They'll not only have reasons for hope, but they can also get the free gifts we offer for sharing this with others. You'll be giving someone a **double-blessing**! If you believe in karma, or reaping what you sow, or cause and effect, then you know when you bless others the blessings return to you in some way—and you can never have too many blessings lined up!

Thank you for being you,

Dennis

