

LIFE 101

Everything We Wish We Had Learned About Life In School -- But Didn't

By Peter McWilliams (1950-2000)

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PART ONE INTRODUCTION TO LIFE

I call this book *LIFE 101* because it contains all the things I wish I had learned about life in school but, for the most part, did not. After twelve (or more) years of schooling, we know how to figure the square root of an isosceles triangle (invaluable in daily life), but we might not know how to forgive ourselves and others.

We know what direction migrating birds fly in autumn, but we're not sure which way we want to go. We have dissected a frog, but perhaps have never explored the dynamics of human relationships. We know who wrote "To be or not to be, that is the question," but we don't know the answer. We know what pi is, but we're not sure who we are.

We may know how to diagram a sentence, but we may not know how to love ourselves. That our educational system is not designed to teach us the "secrets of life" is no secret. In school, we learn how to do everything--except how to live.

Fred Sanford: Didn't you learn anything being my son? Who do you think I'm doing this all for?

Lamont Sanford: Yourself.

Fred: Yeah, you learned something.

Maybe that's the way it should be. Unraveling life's "mysteries" and discovering life's "secrets" (which are, in fact, neither mysterious nor secretive) may take the courage and determination found only in a self-motivated pursuit.

You probably already know there's more to life than reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic. I'm glad you learned reading, of course, or you wouldn't be able to read this book. I'm also glad I learned 'riting (such as it is).

And 'rithmetic? Well, as Mae West once said, "One and one is two, two and two are four, and five'll get you ten if you know how to work it." That's what this book is about: knowing how to work it, and having fun along the way.

Although a lot can be learned from adversity, most of the same lessons can be learned through enjoyment and laughter. If you're like me, you've probably had more than enough adversity. (After graduating from the School of Hard Knocks, I automatically enrolled in the University of Adversity.)

I agree with Alan Watts, who said, "I am *sincere* about life, but I'm not *serious* about it." If you're looking for serious, pedantic, didactic instruction, you will not find it here. I will--with a light heart--present hundreds of techniques and suggestions, and for each of them I make the same suggestion:

Give it a try. If it works for you, fine--use it; it's yours. If it doesn't work for you, let it go and try other things that may. When you find things that *do* work for you, I advise you to follow Shakespeare's advice: "Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel."

Naturally, not everything in *LIFE 101* will be for you. I'm laying out a smorgasbord. The carrot-raisin salad you pass up may be the very thing another person craves, while the caviar you're making a beeline for might be just so much salty black stuff to the carrot-salad lover.

If I say something you find not "true," please don't discount everything else in the book. It may be "true" for someone else. That same someone else might say, "What nonsense," about something which has you knowingly muttering, "How true." It's a big world; we are all at different points on our personal journeys. Life has many truths; take what you can use and leave the rest.

We don't receive wisdom; we must discover it for ourselves after a journey that no one can take for us or spare us.

MARCEL PROUST

If you take from this book ten percent--any ten percent--and use it as your own, I'll consider my job well done.

Which brings me to the question: Who is the *real* teacher of *LIFE 101*? I'll get to that shortly. (Hint: It's certainly not me--or *I*, as the grammatically correct among us would say.) (Second hint: It is *definitely* not me.)

For now, welcome to *LIFE 101* . When you were born, you probably had quite a welcome, although you may have been too young to remember it. So, as you begin this "life," please feel welcome.

Although it may be "just a book," it's a book of ideas from my mind to yours; a book of best wishes from my heart to yours. As James Burke observed, "When you read a book, you hold another's mind in your hands." (So be careful!) Here's to our time together being intimate, enjoyable, and loving.

Welcome.

Why Life?

Life is far too important a thing ever to talk about.
OSCAR WILDE

What's it all about? Why are we here? What's the point? *Is* there a point? Why bother?

Why life?

At some point, you have probably pondered The Meaning of Life, and you came up with a satisfactory answer, which either has or has not stood the test of time, or you shrugged mightily, muttered, "Beats the hell out of me," and ordered another cheeseburger. *The Meaning of Life* . Very funny; very true.

The question which precedes "What's the meaning of life?" is, of course, "*Is there* a meaning to life?" Beats the hell out of me. I'm going to explore the first question *as though* the answer to the second question is yes.

If it's true that life has no meaning--no purpose--then it doesn't matter whether I've consumed a few pages speculating on the meaning of life. So let's play a game called "Life Matters."

We'll start the game by *assuming* there is a purpose. The first question of Life Matters: "What is the purpose of life?"

Here's my answer:

Life is for doing, learning, and enjoying.

Doing

Things won are done; joy's soul lies in the doing.
SHAKESPEARE

One thing about humans: we are *doing* creatures. When we're not doing something, we're *thinking* about doing something, which, in its own way, *is* doing something. When we sleep, we toss and dream. We exercise to keep our bodies in shape so we can do some more.

We are well designed for doing. Unlike trees, our bodies can move from place to place. In a matter of seconds, our emotions can move from happy to sad and back again. Our thoughts move us to places we can't go physically--our memory moves us back in time, our intelligence anticipates future movement, and our imagination takes us to places we've never been.

As to nature-you name it, and humans have either changed it, processed it, painted it, preserved it, moved it, or done *something* to it. (At the very least, we *named* it.) We seem bent on rearranging the world.

The theatrical director Moss Hart had a country home. He would visit on weekends, and request of his landscape designer that a few trees be put over there, a stream over here, and please move that mountain a few hundred feet to the left. When playwright George S. Kaufman visited Hart's home, he remarked, "This is the way God would do it if He only had money."

The shortest answer is doing.
LORD HERBERT 1583-1648

It's often been observed that, from afar, the doing of humans resembles the bustling of ants. We must occasionally wonder, "What is the purpose of all this doing?" We are not, after all, rocks, which don't seem to do much at all. We have the ability to do, but why?

We must, of course, do in order to meet our bodily needs (which would not be as great if we did not do as much), but even after these needs are met, we keep on doing. Why?

My suggestion:

Our doing allows for more learning.

Learning is not attained by chance, it must be sought for with ardor and attended to with diligence.

ABIGAIL ADAMS 1780

Learning

Wear your learning, like your watch, in a private pocket: and do not pull it out and strike it, merely to show that you have one.

EARL OF CHESTERFIELD 1774

Life is for learning? Learning what? You name it. There's a lot to learn. In just the first five years of life we learned physical coordination, walking, talking, eating, going potty, interaction with family and playmates, a great many facts about this planet, and all the other things that differentiate a five-year-old from a newborn infant.

From age five to ten we learned reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, history, science, music, sports--and when we weren't watching television we learned some more about people: friends, relatives, enemies, allies, rivals, supporters, detractors.

Some of what we learned early on turned out to be true (the earth is round; if you want a friend, be a friend; cleanliness is next to impossible) and some of it turned out to be false (Santa Claus; the Tooth Fairy; Kansas is more fun than Oz).

Some things had to be relearned-or unlearned-and while relearning and unlearning, maybe we learned what to do about disappointment--and maybe we didn't.

Looking in on most lives, we see dramatic growth until the age of fifteen or twenty. Then the growing slows, stops, or, in some cases, regresses.

Most people declare themselves "done" when their formal education is complete. What is it about renting a cap and gown and receiving a scroll of paper that makes us think our learning days are over?

I call that mind free which jealously guards its intellectual rights and powers, which calls no man master, which does not content itself with a passive or hereditary faith, which opens itself to light whencesoever it may come, which receives new truth as an angel from Heaven.

WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING 1829

It's not that there's nothing left to learn. Far from it. "Commencement" does not just mean graduation; it means a new beginning.

The more we learn, the more we do. The more we do, the more we learn. But in all this doing and learning, let's not forget one of the most important lessons of all--enjoyment.

How good is man's life, the mere living! How fit to employ all the heart and the soul and the senses forever in joy!

ROBERT BROWNING 1855

Enjoying

Seek not, my soul, the life of the immortals; but enjoy to the full the resources that are within thy reach.

PINDAR 518-438 B.C.

Joy is an interesting word. It does not have an automatic opposite created by grafting "un" or "dis" or "in" onto it. There is pleasure and displeasure, happiness and unhappiness, gratitude and ingratitude--but there is no unjoy, disjoy, or injoy. (Can you imagine the word *in* enjoy?)

The old story comes to mind: Two brothers went to ride ponies on their uncle's ranch, but first the uncle insisted that they shovel a large pile of manure out of a stall. One brother hated the project, grumbling his way through a few halfhearted scoops. The other brother was laughing and singing and shoveling with abandon. "What are you so happy about?" the first brother asked. "Well," the second replied, "with all this manure, there must be a pony in here somewhere!"

So it is with life. When life seems truly excremental, we can moan and groan, or we can--even in the midst of anger, terror, confusion, and pain--tell ourselves, "There must be a lesson in here someplace!"

The trick, I think, is to learn to enjoy the process of learning. As Confucius observed 2,500 years ago, "With coarse rice to eat, with water to drink, and my bended arm for a pillow--I still have joy in the midst of these things."

"With an eye made quiet by the power of harmony, and the deep power of joy," wrote Wordsworth, "we see into the life of things."

A man's life of any worth is a continual allegory.

JOHN KEATS

Life Is a Metaphor

There are many models for life: analogies, allegories, and metaphors to help us understand something as complicated, intricate, and seemingly *un* understandable as life.

There is the Life-Is-a-Game school of thought (and its many subschools: Life Is a Baseball Game, Life Is a Football Game, Life Is Like Tennis, Life Is Chess, Life's Like Monopoly, Life As Croquet).

"Life is like a game of whist," Eugene Hare pointed out some time ago. "From unseen sources the cards are shuffled, and the hands are dealt." Josh Billings completed the thought: "Life consists not in holding good cards but in playing those you hold well."

Some believe Life Is an Intricate Machine (very popular in Germany). In Northern California they believe Life Is a Computer. Buckminster Fuller synthesized the two: "The earth is like a spaceship that didn't come with an operating manual."

Is life work or play? Karl Marx said, "Living is working," and Henry Ford, of all people, agreed: "Life is work." Disagreeing is Leon de Montenaeken, who said, "Life is but play," and Liza de Minnelli, who sang, "Life is a cabaret."

The very purpose of existence is to reconcile the glowing opinion we hold of ourselves with the appalling things that other people think about us.
QUENTIN CRISP

Seneca said, "Life is a play. It's not its length, but its performance that counts." What kind of play is it? Jean de La Bruyere suggested life's "a tragedy for those who feel, a comedy for those who think." Kirk Douglas called life "a B-picture script." (From Seneca to Kirk Douglas in one paragraph. Not bad.)

Shakespeare, of course, called life "a poor player, that struts and frets his hour upon the stage" and James Thurber continued: "It's a tale told in an idiom, full of unsoundness and fury, signifying nonism." George Bernard Shaw also took the Bard to task: "Life is no brief candle to me. It is sort of a splendid torch that I have got hold of for the moment."

There are those who like musical analogies. "Life is something like a trumpet," the great W. C. Handy pointed out, "If you don't put anything in, you won't get anything out." Samuel Butler said, "Life is playing a violin solo in public and learning the instrument as one goes on." Ella

Wheeler Wilcox sang, "Our lives are songs: God writes the words / and we set them to music at pleasure; / and the song grows glad, or sweet or sad / as we choose to fashion the measure."

One of the nicest literary analogies comes from the Jewish Theological Seminary: "A life is a single letter in the alphabet. It can be meaningless. Or it can be part of a great meaning."

One of the greatest letters in the American alphabet, [HELEN KELLER](#), proclaimed, "Life is either a daring adventure, or nothing." George Bernard Shaw agreed: "Life is a series of inspired follies. The difficulty is to find them to do. Never lose a chance: it doesn't come every day."

How about closing this chapter with the Life-Is-Food contingent?

"Life is an onion," Carl Sandburg wrote. "You peel it off one layer at a time, and sometimes you weep." "Life is like eating artichokes," T. A. Dorgan tells us. "You've got to go through so much to get so little." Or maybe it's more as Auntie Mame pointed out: "Life is a banquet, and some poor sons-of-bitches are starving."

Don Marquis called life "a scrambled egg." Make of that what you will--but then, we could say that about life itself, couldn't we?

And what do *I* think life is? What model do I use to describe our time together? Please turn the page.

Life Is a Classroom

*Universities should be safe havens
where ruthless
examination of realities
will not be distorted
by the aim to please
or inhibited by the risk of displeasure.
KINGMAN BREWSTER*

It should come as no surprise that, if I think life is for learning, I would view the process of life itself as a classroom. But it's not a dull, sit-in-neat-little-rows-and-listen-to-some-puffed-up-professor-drone- on-and-on classroom. Life is (as I'm sure you've noticed) *experiential* . In that sense, life's more of a workshop.

I like to think the workshop/classroom of life is perfectly arranged so that we learn what we need to learn, when we need to learn it, just the way we need to learn it.

The operative word in all that is *need*, not *want*.

We don't always learn what we *want* to learn. In tenth-grade biology there was only one animal's reproductive methods I was interested in studying, but I had to start with splitting of amoebas (yawn) and work my way up. The biology teacher had a lesson plan different from mine.

And so, it seems, does life.

Life's lessons come in all shapes and sizes. Sometimes what we need to know we learn in a formal way, such as taking a class or reading a book. Sometimes we learn by an informal, seemingly accidental process: an overheard comment in an elevator, a friend's offhand remark, or the line of a song from a passing radio ("Don't worry, be happy").

I like to think there are no accidents.

The most important function of education at any level is to develop the personality of the individual and the significance of his life to himself and to others. This is the basic architecture of a life; the rest is ornamentation and decoration of the structure.

GRAYSON KIRK

Positive lessons are not always taught in positive ways. A flat tire (hardly a positive occurrence) can teach any number of lessons: acceptance, the value of planning, patience, the joy of service (if another person has the flat tire), the gratitude of being served (if another person helps you), and so on.

We can also use the same flat tire to learn (or relearn or rerelearn or--in my case--rererelearn) depressing lessons: life isn't fair; nothing can be trusted; if anything can go wrong it will (at the worst possible moment); life's a pain--then you die; nobody loves me.

Do you begin to see your role in all this? The classroom of life is not third grade, where all you will learn each day is neatly planned--including recess. In life, you *choose* what you learn from the many lessons presented to you, and your *choice* is fundamental to what you learn.

LIFE 101 13 There are any number of lessons we can learn from any experience--both uplifting and "downpushing." Experience, it is said, is the best teacher--providing, of course, we become the best students. But who, really, is the teacher?

PART TWO ADVANCED TOOLS FOR EAGER LEARNERS

Be wiser than other people, if you can, but do not tell them so.

LORD CHESTERFIELD

Life is, if nothing else, a persistent teacher. It will repeat a lesson over and over until it is learned. How does life know we've learned? When we change our behavior. Until then, even if we intellectually "know" something, we haven't really *learned* it. School remains in session.

The good news is that we learn all we need to know--eventually.

For some, however, eventually is not soon enough. If there's something they can learn that will *eventually* make their lives happier, healthier, and more productive, why not learn it *now*? That brings happiness, health, and productivity to us sooner--and it avoids a lot of (perhaps painful) lessons along the way.

Others aren't content with learning only what they "need" to know. "Getting by" is not enough. They want more. They are the "eager learners" who read books with titles such as *LIFE 101*.

Someone once said that the only two things that motivate an enlightened person are love and curiosity. I can't speak for my state of enlightenment, but I can say that, considering my level of curiosity, it's a good thing I'm not a cat.

What a wonderful day we've had. You have learned something, and I have learned something. Too bad we didn't learn it sooner. We could have gone to the movies instead.

BALKI BARTOKOMOUS

Anatole France pointed out more than a century ago, "The whole art of teaching is only the art of awakening the natural curiosity of young minds for the purpose of satisfying it afterwards."

But what if we have questions that seemingly can't be answered? When faced with this quandary, I like to comfort myself with this thought of Emerson: "Undoubtedly we have no questions to ask which are unanswerable. We must trust the perfection of the creation so far as to believe that whatever curiosity the order of things has awakened in our minds, the order of things can satisfy."

"Life was meant to be lived," Eleanor Roosevelt wrote in her autobiography, "and curiosity must be kept alive. One must never, for whatever reason, turn his back on life."

This section of the book contains a series of tools designed to keep curiosity alive and thriving. These same tools can also be used to find satisfying answers to the questions you may be curious about. These techniques are designed to accelerate the process of learning.

All of these tools, by the way, are optional. To learn the necessary lessons of life, no one *needs* to know or use any of them. So there's no need to struggle--thinking that if you don't master them your life will be a failure. Experiment with these techniques. Play with them. Have fun.

Also, there's no need to teach these techniques to anyone else--much less *insist* that people relate to you as though they've already mastered them. These skills are electives in the school of life. If you choose to use any or all of them for *your* accelerated learning, that's fine; but please don't expect--and certainly don't demand--that others accelerate their learning too.

LIFE 101 15 Before we start, let's take a look at why human beings spend so much time struggling *against* learning; why we, as a species, seem so opposed to the exploration of new things. Haven't you been curious about that?

Why Do We Resist Learning?

The only reason I always try to meet and know the parents better is because it helps me to forgive their children.

LOUIS JOHANNOT

If we're here to learn, and if we have this seemingly in-built desire to learn (curiosity), why do we resist learning? The classic example is the argument: "Listen to me!" "No, you listen to me!" "No, you listen to me!" And so on.

It seems that somewhere around eighteen (give or take ten years), something in us decides, "That's it, I've had it, I'm done. I know all I need to know. I'm not learning any more."

Why?

Let's return to the idea of the small child being taught about life by his or her parents. Parents are like gods to little children--the source of food, protection, comfort, love.

Also, parents are BIG! They're four to five times bigger than children. Imagine how much respect (awe? fear?) you'd have for someone twenty to thirty feet tall, weighing 500 to 1,000 pounds.

Let's imagine a child--two, three years old--playing in a room. The parents are reading, the child is playing, all is well. After an hour or so, CRASH! The child bumps a table and knocks over a lamp.

Where there once was almost no interaction with the parents, suddenly there is a lot--almost all of it negative. "How many times have we told you." "Can't you do anything right?" "What's the

matter with you?" "That was my favorite lamp!" Shame, bad, nasty, no good. This verbal tirade may or may not be reinforced by physical punishment.

I have found the best way to give advice to your children is to find out what they want and then advise them to do it.

HARRY S. TRUMAN

What does the child remember from an evening at home with the folks? Does the child remember the hours spent successfully playing (i.e., no broken anything) while Mommy and Daddy read, or does he or she remember the intense ten minutes of "bad boy," "nasty girl," "shame, shame, shame," after the fall?

The negative, of course. It was loud and it was frightening (imagine a pair of thirty-foot, 1,000pound gods yelling at you). It was, for the most part, the *only* interaction the child may have had with "the gods" all evening. (Especially if being put to bed early was part of the punishment.)

When a child's primary memory of the communication from his or her parents ("the gods") is "no, don't, stop that, shouldn't, mustn't, shame, bad, bad, bad," what's the child being taught? That he or she can do no good; must be alert for failure at every moment, and still will fail; is a disappointment, a letdown, a failure.

In short, a child begins to believe that he or she is fundamentally not good enough, destined for failure, in the way. In a word, *unworthy*.

There is very little in the traditional educational system to counteract this mistaken belief. If anything, school etches the image even deeper. (If we learned all we needed to know in kindergarten, it was promptly drummed out of us in first grade.) You are taught you must perform, keep up, and "make the grade," or you aren't worth much. If you *do* work hard at making the grades, some authority figure is bound to ask, "Why are you studying all the time? Why aren't you out playing with the other children? What's wrong with you? Don't you have any friends?"

Catch-22 never had it so good.

Naturally, we can't go around feeling unworthy *all the time*. It hurts too much. So we invent defenses--behaviors that give the *illusion* of safety. Soon we notice that others have not only adopted similar defenses, but have taken their defenses to new and exotic extremes. The school of limitation is in session.

I was thrown out of college for cheating on the metaphysics exam; I looked into the soul of the boy next to me.

Woody Allen

We begin hanging out with other members of the same club. We are no longer alone. In fact, we start to feel worthy. We have comrades, companions, confidants, and chums.

The club? Club Let's-Hide-Away-From-The-Hurtful-Unworthiness International has four main chapters:

The Rebels

The rebels like to think of themselves as "independent." They have, in fact, merely adopted a knee-jerk reaction to whatever "law" is set before them. They are prime candidates for reverse psychology. ("The best way to keep children from putting beans in their ears is to tell them they must put beans in their ears.") They conform to nonconformity.

MOST FEARED FORTUNE COOKIE: "A youth should be respectful to his elders."

SLOGAN: "Authority, you tell us that we're no good. Well, authority, *you're* no good."

MOTTO (minus the first two words): " and the horse you came in on!"

If the ones who tell you you're no good are no good, then, somehow, that makes you good. Somehow.

The Unconscious

These are the people who seem to be not all there because, for the most part, they're not all there. They're not dumb, mind you; they're just someplace else: a desert island, a rock concert, an ice cream parlor. They are masters of imagination. With authority figures, they do their best to *appear* dumb, drugged, or asleep. The powers that be then become frustrated and leave them alone--precisely what the unconscious want. Very clever.

FAVORITE FORTUNE COOKIE: "To know that you do not know is the best."

SLOGAN: "You can't expect much from me, so you can't criticize me because, uh, um, what was I saying?"

MOTTO: "Huh?"

The more the world criticizes them, the more they retreat to a fantasy world beyond criticism.

A boy becomes an adult three years before his parents think he does, and about two years after he thinks he does.

LEWIS B. HERSHEY

The Comfort Junkies

All that is (or might be) uncomfortable is avoided (unless avoiding it would be more uncomfortable), and all that might bring comfort (food, TV, Walkmans, drink, drugs, and other distractions) is sought after (unless the seeking after them would be more uncomfortable). In their youth the comfort junkies scarf french fries, then mature into couch potatoes.

MOST FEARED FORTUNE COOKIE: "The scholar who cherishes the love of comfort is not fit to be deemed a scholar."

SLOGAN: "Comfort at any cost! (Unless it's too expensive.)"

MOTTO (taken from Tolkien): "In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit. Not a nasty, dirty, wet hole, filled with the ends of worms and an oozy smell, nor yet a dry, bare, sandy hole with nothing in it to sit down on or to eat: it was a hobbit-hole, and that means comfort."

They memorize as much of their motto as is comfortable.

The Approval Seekers

The best way to prove worthiness is to have lots of people telling you how wonderful you are. Approval seekers work so hard for other people's approval they have little or no time to seek their own. But their own doesn't matter. They, after all, are unworthy, and what's the worth of an unworthy person's opinion? These people take the opposite tack of the rebels: rebels deem the opinions of others unworthy; approval seekers deem others' opinions *too* worthy. Approval seekers would run for class president, but they're afraid of a backlash, so they usually win treasurer by a landslide.

MOST FEARED FORTUNE COOKIE: "Fine words and an insinuating appearance are seldom associated with true virtue."

SLOGAN: "What can I do for *you* today?"

MOTTO: "Nice sweater!"

Without such people, homecoming floats would never get built.

I'm an experienced woman; I've been around. . . Well, all right, I might not've been around, but I've been. . . nearby.

MARY RICHARDS
THE MARY TYLER MOORE SHOW

You've probably been able to place all your friends in their respective clubhouses. If you're having trouble placing yourself, you might ask a few friends *your* approval.

If you reject the idea that you could possibly fit into any category, you're probably a rebel. If you accept your friends' evaluations too readily, you may be looking for approval. If you forget to ask, you're unconscious. If you're afraid to ask, you may be seeking comfort. If a friend says, "You don't fit in any of these; you seem to transcend them all," that person is probably looking for *your* approval.

Most of us tend to pay some dues to each chapter at one time or another, about one aspect of life or another. We may, for example, be rebels when it comes to speed limits, unconscious when it comes to income tax, comfort junkies when it comes to our favorite bad habit, and approval seekers in intimate relationships.

These are also the four major ways people avoid learning. The rebels don't need to learn; the unconscious don't remember why they should; the comfortable find it too risky; and the approval seekers don't want to rock any boats. Most of us have our own personal combination of the four--a little of this and a little of that--that has perhaps kept us from learning all we'd like to know.

How to surmount these ancient barriers? Tools, techniques, and practice, practice, practice. Where do we find these tools? The rest of this book has quite a few.

PART THREE

MASTER TEACHERS IN DISGUISE

A problem is a chance for you to do your best.

DUKE ELLINGTON

Your Master Teacher--as wonderful as your Master Teacher is--is not the only Master Teacher in your life. Far from it.

Most people think Master Teachers are only "in the skies." Not so. They're here, there, and everywhere. Why don't we recognize them as such? Because they are also masters of disguise.

How do they disguise themselves? Only as some of the most potentially powerful learning tools in our lives: mistakes, guilt and resentment, fear, pain and disease, stubbornness, addictions, depression, death, emergencies--all the things most people would, if they could, eliminate.

Some try awfully hard to eliminate them, too. Ever notice the themes of many bestselling self-help books? How to get rid of this Master Teacher, how to dispose of that Master Teacher, 101 ways to eradicate some other Master Teacher.

Why would we not take advantage of potential sources of wisdom in our lives? Maybe we forgot that they are teachers--or maybe nobody ever explained it to us.

Shall I crack any of those old jokes, master, At which the audience never fail to laugh?

ARISTOPHANES 405 B.C.

Let's pretend your Master Teachers sent me here to explain what they have to offer you and what great friends they are. That way maybe you'll use them and stop giving them such a bad name. Consider me the goodwill ambassador for Master Teachers in Disguise Guild.

There is a funny scene from the musical *Showboat*. Two mountain men, who have never seen a play, stumble into the showboat theater, unaware that the actors are acting in a play. They converse with the heroine and encourage the hero. When the villain arrives, they chase him off the stage with six-guns. The mountaineers are proud of themselves for having done "the right thing."

The irony in this, of course, is that the audience, watching *Showboat*, forgets the men playing the mountaineers are actors, too. The audience laughs at the naiveté of people mistaking play-acting for real-life. In order to appreciate the humor, however, the audience watching *Showboat* must be lost in the illusion themselves.

That's how the Master Teachers get away with the disguise: we forget they are sources of wisdom--and seldom are we interested in remembering again. If someone stood up during a performance of *Showboat* and began yelling, "Those aren't mountain men! Those are actors! Those aren't real guns! Those are props!" the person would be ushered from the theater.

The Master Teachers need the same illusion to teach as well as they do. The more we believe the characters in a movie (and forget they're really actors), the more moving the movie can be. Thus, the more we believe the Master's disguise, the more powerful and complete the lesson.

So why am I spilling the beans?

If you're struggling too much with the teacher, you might not stand back and learn the lesson. The techniques in this section of the book allow you to take that step back. You can learn from past Master Teaching sessions--all that you might have considered the doom and gloom of your past. You can also use the techniques to learn more quickly the ongoing lessons being taught by your Master Teachers.

Good behavior is the last refuge of mediocrity.

HENRY S. HASKINS

But by exposing the Master Teachers (the "villains" of the piece) as the wonderful, kindly, loving friends they are, am I not risking the effectiveness of future lessons?

Not likely.

You'll forget all this.

You're obviously suffering from delusions of adequacy.

ALEXIS CARRINGTON DYNASTY

Mistakes

Experience is the name everyone gives to their mistakes.

OSCAR WILDE

One of the least disguised of the Master Teachers in Disguise is mistakes. Mistakes, obviously, show us what needs improving. Without mistakes, how would we know what we had to work on?

This process seems an invaluable aid to learning, and yet many people avoid situations in which they might make mistakes. Many people also deny or defend the mistakes they've made--or may be making.

There is a story told of Edison, who made, say, 1,000 unsuccessful attempts before arriving at the lightbulb. "How did it feel to fail 1,000 times?" a reporter asked. "I didn't fail 1,000 times," Edison replied. "The lightbulb was an invention with 1,001 steps."

Why don't most of us see our own lives in this way? I think it goes back to unworthiness. We assume a faade of perfection in a futile attempt to *prove* our worthiness. "An unworthy person couldn't be this perfect," the faade maintains. Alas, being human, we make mistakes. Mistakes crack the faade. As the faade crumbles, a frantic attempt is made to hide the hideous thing (unworthiness) the faade was designed to hide--from ourselves as much as from others.

If we didn't play this game of denial with ourselves, we would make mistakes, admit them freely, and ask not, "Who's to blame?" or "How can I hide this?" but "What's the lesson here? How can I do this better?"

The goal becomes excellence, not perfection.

Aim for success, not perfection. Never give up your right to be wrong, because then you will lose the ability to learn new things and move forward with your life. Remember that fear always lurks behind perfectionism. Confronting your fears and allowing yourself the right to be human can, paradoxically, make you a far happier and more productive person.

DR. DAVID M. BURNS

It helps to realize that we're *far* from perfect--we are, in fact, *crazy*. I first realized I was crazy when I was fifteen. I was in the shower brushing my teeth. As was my custom, I spit the toothpaste-gook on the shower floor. By some strange suspension of the law of physics, however, the gook landed on my *foot*.

"Eeeuuuuuu!" I recoiled. The thought of *toothpaste-gook* on my *foot* was *too disgusting* to even consider.

And then, from wherever those occasional sane thoughts come, came the thought, "Less than one second before the gook landed on your foot, *it was in your mouth.*"

At that moment, I knew I was crazy.

Life has never been the same.

One of the best examples of how strong the taboo against making a mistake has become is the use of the word *sin*. In ancient Roman times, *sin* was a term used in archery. It meant simply *to miss the mark*. At target practice, each shot was either a hit or a sin. If you sinned, you made corrections and tried again.

Today, of course, *sin* means, to quote the *American Heritage*, "A condition of estrangement from God as a result of breaking God's law." Whew. No wonder people try to avoid even "the near occasion" of sin. Some people treat mistakes with the same reverence.

Mistakes are valuable if, for no other reason, they show us what *not* to do. As Joseph Ray told us, "The Athenians, alarmed at the internal decay of their Republic, asked Demosthenes what to do. His reply: 'Do not do what you are doing now.' "

In Hollywood, mis-takes are common. ("That was wonderful, darlings. Now let's get ready for take two.") Give yourself as many re-takes as you need. Stars do it. ("I didn't feel quite right with that one, Mr. deMille. Can we take it again?") Why not you?

A Hollywood song (lyrics by Dorothy Fields) sums it up: "Pick yourself up, dust yourself off, start all over again." Or, to quote an African proverb, "Do not look where you fell, but where you slipped."

Mistakes are the portals of discovery.

JAMES JOYCE

If you're learning, growing, and trying new things--expect mistakes. They're a natural part of the learning process. In fact, someone once said, "If you're not making at least fifty mistakes a day, you're not trying hard enough." What the person meant, I think, is that growth, discovery, and expansion have mistakes built into them.

To avoid situations in which you *might* make mistakes may be the biggest mistake of all.

The best things and best people rise out of their separateness. I'm against a homogenized society because I want the cream to rise.

The Two Faces of Anger: Guilt and Resentment

I hate quotations.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Guilt is anger directed at ourselves--at what we did or did not do. Resentment is anger directed at others--at what they did or did not do.

The process of guilt and resentment is the same:

- 1 We have an image that either we or others should live up to. (An image of all the should's, must's, have-to's, and demands we learned or created about our own and/or others' behavior.)
- 2 We emotionally demand that we or others live up to this image.
- 3 We or they fail to live up to our image.
- 4 We judge the "contrary action" as wrong, bad, evil, wicked, etc.
- 5 We become emotionally upset--bitter, alienated, hurt, hostile, belligerent, combative, contentious, quarrelsome, vicious, touchy, cranky, cross, grouchy, testy, enraged, aggravated, annoyed, furious, teed-off, etc., etc. We'll put them all under the general umbrella of "angry."
- 6 We assign blame for the emotional upset--either *we* did it or *they* did it. (The judge pronounces sentence.)
- 7 The swift execution of justice. If we are to blame, we direct the anger toward ourselves, feeling regret, remorse, shame, repentance, culpability, fault--we'll call all that guilt. If the transgressor of our expectations was someone or something other than ourselves, we call our anger spite, jealousy, suspicion, malice, begrudging, covetousness, envy, indignation--all of which we'll call resentment. The sad fact is that, whether we blame *us* or *them*, *we feel the hurt*. But that is not considered, at least for long.
- 8 All of this continues for the prescribed length of time and intensity. No reprieves, no appeals--*possible* time off for *very* good behavior.

Every great mistake has a halfway moment, a split second when it can be recalled and perhaps remedied.

PEARL S. BUCK

If these are the two faces of anger, what's the good in that? Frankly, not much. So why do I have anger in a section on Master Teachers? If we had listened to the voices of the Master Teachers *at the very beginning*, the *feelings* of guilt and resentment would not have been necessary. To save us from these is the job of the Master Teacher, anger.

Anger begins as an inner twinge. We sense something long before it blossoms (explodes?) into an emotional tirade. If we listen to this twinge--and follow its advice--the emotional outburst (or inburst) is not needed.

What advice is this Master Teacher giving? Stop, look, and change.

Stop. Don't do anything. You are at a choice point. You have two ways to go. One choice equals freedom. The other choice equals misery--familiar misery, but misery nonetheless.

Look. What image (expectation, belief, should, must, ought-to) about either yourself or another is about to be (or has recently been) violated? ("People *should* drive carefully." "I *mustn't* eat cake if I'm on a diet.")

Change. What do you change? *The image.* Your image is *not accurate*--according to hard, cold, physical evidence. People *should* drive carefully, but do they always? Hardly. That "should" is inaccurate, false, erroneous, wrong. People on diets *mustn't* eat cake, but do they? You bet. That "mustn't" is untrue, faulty, mistaken, and incorrect. Based on the actual life-data given to you, your images (should's, must's, have-to's) are all wet (or don't hold any water, or sink in the ocean of truth, or any other aquatic metaphor you choose).

Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves.

CARL JUNG

But what do we often do with the image that is proven--conclusively--to be inaccurate? Do we disregard it? Do we intelligently alter it, based on reality? ("People should drive carefully, and sometimes they don't." "People on diets shouldn't eat too much cake too often.") No. We make ourselves miserable with the inaccurate image. The world's actions do not conform to our beliefs. Woe is us. Our own actions don't conform to our beliefs. Woe *on* us.

Can you see the absurdity of this? We demand that our illusion (our image) be more real than reality (what actually happened), hurting ourselves in the process. Where is the victory in that? (I bet you thought that was a rhetorical question. It's not. There are answers.)

First, we get to feel *right*. Feeling right is a strong drug. Some people sacrifice a lot to be right. Ever hear the expression "dead right"? The question the Master Teacher asks with each initial twinge of guilt or resentment: Would you rather be right or be happy? If we answer "Happy," we are free. If we answer "Right," the cycle of misery begins again. If we're right we must punish-either ourselves or another. As I mentioned, the irony is that when we punish another, we first punish ourselves. Who do you think feels all that hate we have for another? The other person? Seldom. Us? Always.

Second, anger is a habit. We learned it early on--before we could walk or talk, in some instances. The habit is so ingrained in some people that they haven't understood a word of this chapter. "What *is* he talking about? When people do something *wrong*, I will *naturally* feel upset. When I do something *bad*, I will *of course* feel guilty." It's not "natural," it's not "of course"; it's learned. If our early lessons of acceptance were as successful as our early lessons of anger, how much happier we would all be.

*The last temptation is
the greatest treason:
To do the right deed
for the wrong reason.*

T. S. ELIOT

Third, guilt and resentment give us (and others) permission to do it again. Far from preventing a recurrence, the punishment simply lets the person (either you or another) say, "I've paid my dues; now I'm free to do it again." Many people weigh the guilt they will feel against the pleasure of the forbidden action they want to take. As long as they're willing to "pay the price," the action's okay. People often ponder the anticipated wrath of another before taking certain actions. "If I'm five minutes late, he'll be a little mad." They make a choice between another's resentment and whatever it is that might make them five minutes late. If they're willing to endure the chastisement, they reason, it's okay to be late. Guilt and resentment, then, far from preventing "evil,"* perpetuate it. *"*EVIL*" is "*LIVE*" spelled backwards.

What if we use the twinge of guilt to change the *action*? What if we feel the guilt and *don't* eat the cake? Isn't this using the Master Teacher's message for our good?

Well, it's a good start. If we don't do something because we're afraid of the guilt, we are, in fact, being motivated by fear and guilt. If we do good because we fear what might happen to us if we don't do good, the act of good is tainted with fear. As a transition--especially when breaking a habit--it's a beginning, but we must move beyond that or we find ourselves in the trap of not feeling guilty because we'd feel guilty if we felt guilty.

So what can we use to motivate ourselves to do good? Do good because good is the right thing to do. Not right as "conforming to law and morality (or else)," but right as "in accordance with fact, reason, and truth."

Another great motivator is love. Love yourself enough to stay on the diet because you love your body and want to keep it healthy.

More on this and other positive motivators later, along with the cure for guilt and resentment.

The cure for guilt and resentment? Forgiveness. The preventative? Acceptance. The best reason to do good? Loving.

And if you forget any of this, the Master Teacher will be there, just before you veer off-course, asking gently, with that first twinge of guilt or resentment, "Would you rather be right or be happy?"

Your answer will always be respected.

It is easier to get forgiveness than permission.

STUART'S LAW OF RETROACTION

The most important thing is to be whatever you are without shame.

ROD STEIGER

PART FOUR

TOOLS FOR SUCCESSFUL DOERS

Decide what you want, decide what you are willing to exchange for it. Establish your priorities and go to work.

H. L. HUNT

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We can learn by doing--by doing *anything*. Even if we fail--repeatedly--there's something to be learned from the failures. Of course, one of the lessons we can learn from failure is, "I want to learn some new ways of doing things so I don't have to fail so much."

Or, perhaps you already are a successful doer and, like all successful doers, you know there's always more to learn about successfully doing.

This section focuses more on "outer" achievements. The next section, "To Have Joy and to Have It More Abundantly," highlights methods for "inner" success.

You will notice, however, that most tools can be used for either inner or outer learning. The same commitment that allows you to make a million dollars can be used for achieving happiness. The same discipline that allows you to focus on your self-worth can also be used to master scuba diving.

The inner mirrors the outer. The outer mirrors the inner.

What Is Your Purpose?

My function in life was to render clear what was already blindingly conspicuous.

QUENTIN CRISP

Before taking successful action, you must first know what you want. (If you don't know what you want, how will you know when you've gotten it?) Before knowing what you want, it's good to know *why* you want it. A good way of knowing why you want it is knowing your *purpose* in life.

What is your purpose?

A purpose is something you discover. It's already there. It's always been there. You've lived your life by it--perhaps without fully realizing it. (Although when you do realize it, you'll know you've known it all along.)

It's your bellwether, your personal inner divining rod. It tells you, in any given moment, whether you're living your life "on purpose" or not.

A purpose is a simple, positive statement of why you are here. It usually begins, "I am " and is only a few words long.

It is not a goal. A goal is something that can be reached. A purpose is a direction, like east. No matter how far east you travel, there's still lots more east to go. Purposes can be used for selecting goals, just as someone traveling east can select certain cities as guideposts along the eastward journey.

A purpose is never achieved; it is fulfilled in each moment you are "on purpose." You use your purpose to set your course in life. It's your inner compass. When you are "on course," you are "on purpose."

The purpose of life is a life of purpose.

ROBERT BYRNE

A purpose is not an affirmation. Affirmations are created and used to make that creation real. A purpose is not created--it is *discovered*. You already *have* a purpose. You have *always* had a purpose. It has always been the *same* purpose. Your purpose will--for the remainder of this lifetime--remain the same.

A purpose is like a heart. You don't create a heart, but, like the Tin Man in *The Wizard of Oz*, you can discover the one you've always had.

Purposes sound something like this (Don't use this list to *select* a purpose for yourself. Give yourself the time and the freedom to discover your own. These are just to give you an *idea* of what purposes sound like.): "I am a cheerful giver," "I am a happy student," "I am a devoted friend," "I serve the planet," "I am a joyful explorer," "I am a lover of life," "I want a hamburger" (all right--the last one was my *personal* goal for the moment).

There are many ways to discover your purpose. Here are a few. If one doesn't work, try another. Patience, seeker, patience! The discovery of a purpose can take a while. When you know yours, you'll know it was worth the wait.

1 Make a list of all your positive qualities. This is no time for modesty. (False humility, by the way, is just a form of egoism.) Narrow each of your good qualities to one or two words. "Loving, giving, joyful, playful, caring, effective, etc." If your list is short, ask friends for suggestions. Using these words as a starting point, find the two or three that suit you best. Arrange them in sentences starting with "I " or "I am " When you discover your purpose, it will "click."

2 Before going to sleep, give yourself the instruction: "When I wake up, I will know my purpose." Have pen and paper by your bed and, first thing when you wake up, write whatever words are there. It *may* be your purpose.

3 Go to your sanctuary and ask your Master Teacher. (Remember your Master Teacher?)

Once you discover your purpose, I suggest that you not tell anyone. This keeps it powerful. It also keeps others from saying, "So you're a joyful giver, huh? Okay, I'll take five dollars," or "Happy helper? You don't seem very happy to *me*." Life's hard enough without having our purpose on display for the potshots of the world.

It is better to be hated for what you are than loved for what you are not.

ANDRE GIDE

When you know your purpose, it's easier to set and achieve goals. The litmus test of any action is simply, "Does this fulfill my purpose?" If yes, you can choose whether you want to do it or not. There is--as you may already know--a certain value to being "on purpose."

In order to be irreplaceable one must always be different.

COCO CHANEL

Intention and Desire or Method and Behavior?

Often people attempt to live their lives backwards; they try to have more things, or more money, in order to do more of what they want, so they will be happier. The way it actually works is the reverse. You must first be who you really are, then do what you need to do, in order to have what you want.

MARGARET YOUNG

There are some things we want because we really want them. There are other things we want because we think they will give us what we really want. The first category I call *intentions* or *desires* . The second category I call *methods* or *behaviors* .

For example, you may say, "I want a red sports car." I may say, "Fine, and what do you want *from* the red sports car?" "I want adventure." The true desire or intention is, in fact, adventure. The red sports car was the method or behavior to get adventure.

Another example: If you say, "I want more fun," I might ask, "What can you do to have more fun?" You could then give a long list of the things you find fun to do. In this case, *fun* is the intention or desire; the enjoyable activities you've listed are your methods or behaviors for achieving fun.

A person's intentions or desires are *experiences*. They are described by words such as freedom, security, power, happiness, self-worth, success, satisfaction, respect, peace of mind, adventure, love.

The methods or behaviors people use to have these experiences are *symbols* for "the real thing." They include money, job or career, clothes, cars, house, marriage, family, sex, lovers, sex, physical appearance, sex, educational degrees, sex, and travel. (And food.)

One must not lose desires. They are mighty stimulants to creativeness, to love, and to long life.

ALEXANDER BOGOMOLETZ

When people want a physical thing--and, yes, a husband, wife, child, or lover is a physical thing--they are usually talking about methods or behaviors. When they discuss inner experiences, they are generally referring to intentions or desires.

There is nothing wrong with wanting the symbols. This section, in fact, will suggest many techniques (methods? behaviors?) for getting your fair share of symbols.

It helps, however, to know that the house, car, better body, career, or money you want--yes, even a romantic relationship, religion, or spiritual path--is simply a *method* or *behavior* to get something else: something inner, something experiential (security, fun, energy, satisfaction, love, knowledge of God, inner peace).

Why does it help to know this? First, if you know the experience you're looking for, you can make whole *lists* of methods and behaviors that might fulfill it. Love can be found in more places than romantic relationships. Fun can be found without having a million dollars.

You can make a list and "scientifically" investigate it to see if a certain method or behavior fulfills a given desire or intention. If yes, fine. If no, you've still got a long list to explore.

Second, knowing the experiences you seek helps you avoid fear and disappointment. Say you *know* you want adventure and think a red sports car is the way to get it. If the car does it, fine; add "red sports car" to the list of things that (for now) work. If the car doesn't do it, that doesn't mean adventure is out of your reach. Next method or behavior, please.

Third, and perhaps most important, you learn that *you* can fulfill your own desires and intentions without too much outside help. You can fulfill your own desires or intentions *right now*. Want love? Love yourself. Want joy? Be joyful. Want adventure? The last frontier is the interior.

As you can imagine, if *you* provide *yourself* with the experiences you seek, this decreases the frantic quality of pursuing the *symbols* of life. "I can't be happy until I get " "I won't rest until " "My life isn't complete until I ." There's not a desire or intention we can't fulfill for ourselves, right now.

Ironically, once we give fully to ourselves, those symbols just seem to *cascade* in. Relationships, for example. Whom would you rather be around--a joyful, loving, happy person, or a miserable, needy, unhappy person? Well, so would everyone else. (People know this, which is why they *pretend* to be loving, happy, and joyful, in order to "catch" someone.)

When you are genuinely "up" because *you* are the source of your own "upness," people either do or do not relate to you--and whether they do or not is fine. As Frank Sinatra explains, "I bring my own crank."

The last time I saw him he was walking down Lover's Lane holding his own hand.

FRED ALLEN

You can use your behaviors and methods to discover your intentions and desires. Of each external "thing" you want, ask yourself, "What experience am I looking for?"

Experiences can be layers of an onion. Pleasure may be on the surface, but that's really a symbol for contentment, which is a symbol for peace of mind. Keep asking. Eventually you'll find experiences that are complete in and of themselves--experiences you're not using to achieve other experiences.

When you discover your fundamental desires and intentions, you'll know what you *really* want. Then, finding methods and behaviors to create the experiences is not only easier; it's more fun.

You Can Have Anything You Want, but You Can't Have Everything You Want

When I ask people that simple yet profound question, "What do you want?" they sometimes answer, "I want it all!" I often wonder, "If they had it all, where would they *put* it?"

I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go to the mountain. And I've looked over, and I've seen the promised land. So I'm happy tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. THE NIGHT BEFORE HIS DEATH

There's an awful lot of "all" out there. And there's a lot more "all" to be experienced inside. The people who say they want "it all" either have not taken the time to explore what they really want, or don't realize one simple fact of life: "You can have *any* thing you want, but you can't have *every* thing you want."

Living on this planet has some down-to-earth limitations. First, we can put our body in only one place at a time. Second, there are only 24 hours a day, 365 (or 366) days per year. Third, the human lifetime is only so long (150 years seems to be tops).

The limitations become even more severe when we consider the time we spend on *maintenance*: sleeping, washing, eating--and some of us even have to make money to pay for all that.

We can't have "it all" because "all" is more than our "container" of time and space will hold.

Before you cry, "Foul!" consider: You *can* have *anything* you want. Pick what you want most and--if it's available, if it doesn't already belong to someone else (who wants to keep it)--you can have it.

The history books are full of people who said, "I don't care if everybody thinks it's impossible, *I* think it's possible, I want it, and I'm going to get it (or do it)." And they did. You can, too.

The catch? The more unobtainable the "want" you want, the more you must sacrifice to get it. It's not that you *can't* have it, it's that you'll have to give up many--and maybe all--other things.

I was once on a talk show and a woman called in. She said she wanted to be an actress more than anything else. She was quite upset that she hadn't succeeded yet. Our conversation went something like this:

The Wright brothers flew right through the smoke screen of impossibility.

CHARLES F. KETTERING

- "How much time do you spend on your career?"
- "I spend *all my time*."
- "You don't sleep?"
- "Of course I sleep."
- "Are you in a relationship?"
- "Yes, but I only see him four or five nights a week."
- "Do you have a job?"
- "Of course--I have to work to support my two daughters."
- "How old are your daughters?"
- "Four and eight."

As you can guess, this woman spent about an hour a week on her "career." What she meant to say was that she spent all of her *free time* pursuing acting. Unfortunately, it's not likely that an hour a week will give her the success she craves.

My advice to her? After establishing that she loved her daughters and loved her boyfriend and considered them more important than show biz, I suggested she be grateful for the choices she had *already made* and her successful implementation of them. I told her there were any number of successful actresses who wish they had two healthy children and a loving, romantic relationship. The acting? Make it a hobby.

The phrase "spending time" is a precise and accurate one. We all have only so much time this time around. Spend it well.

Who begins too much accomplishes little.

GERMAN PROVERB

It's as though you were in a large store (Earth). You are given enough money (time) to buy *anything* in the store, but not *everything* in the store. You can fit a lot of things in your cart (projects you start). When it comes time to pay, however, if your money runs out, that's it. And this store does not give refunds. At best, the store may reluctantly buy something back as used merchandise--at a fraction of what you paid for it.

Some people put a "want" in their cart--a new career, a relationship, a car, a house, a project--and fail to consider its cost: the time it will take to obtain *and maintain* the want.

They like to quote Edna St. Vincent Millay:

My candle burns at both ends; It will not last the night; But, ah, my foes, and, oh, my friends--It gives a lovely light.

While reciting it, however, they are secretly worried about the wax dripping on the new rug-which hasn't yet been paid for. At some point, they find themselves "out of time," quoting Samuel Hoffenstein: "I burned my candle at both ends, and now have neither foes nor friends."

Some protest: "Time is money, and with money you can *buy* time." Up to a limit, that's true. But you can't hire someone to do all the things you want to do yourself (flying a plane, ballet, race car driving, reading, watching videos). And do you plan to hire people to spend time with your friends, eat your pizzas, or to entertain your lover(s)?

At a certain point in most everyone's life--rich, poor, organized, or scattered--the wants outnumber the available hours in the day. At that point, a want must go a-wanting.

The solution is preventative: choose carefully at the outset. Be grateful that, although you can't have *everything*, some very nice *anythings* await your selection.

PART FIVE

TO HAVE JOY AND TO HAVE IT MORE ABUNDANTLY

Gladness of the heart is the life of a man, and the joyfulness of a man prolongeth his days.

ECCLESIASTICUS 30:22

There is no end to joy--no upper limit. When you think you've had all the joy you can tolerate, you've only reached *your* limit, not joy's. Use that moment to expand your limit.

Don't just increase joy by a little. Double it. Then, double that. Discover that your capacity to know joy is as limitless as joy itself.

As limitless as you.

Grow Up!

The human race, to which so many of my readers belong, has been playing at children's games from the beginning, which is a nuisance for the few people who grow up.

G. K. CHESTERTON 1904

Ever watch someone have a temper tantrum? Or go on and on about how unfairly the world treated her? Or cry over the loss of a love he didn't much like anyway? Ever watch a fit of jealousy, pettiness, or vindictiveness? On those occasions, didn't you want to quote Joan Rivers:

"Grow up!"

I'm not talking about childlike qualities--joy, playfulness, spontaneity. I'm talking about childish traits--spoiled, infantile, inconsiderate.

This sort of immaturity hurts and offends not just those around us; it hurts and offends *us*. Even while we're doing it, we know, "This isn't right." Even through the anger, fear, and separation, we know, "This isn't necessary."

And it's not. It's time to mature, to ripen, to grow up.

Heal the Past

I don't have a warm personal enemy left. They've all died off. I miss them terribly because they helped define me.

CLAIRE BOOTH LUCE

What hurts about the past is our *memory*. We remember the pain of an event, and we hurt again. Fortunately, we can heal the memories of the past.

One technique is to go into your sanctuary (remembering to let the light at your entryway surround, fill, protect, bless, and heal you for your highest good), sit in front of the video screen, and, on the screen, watch the memory that is causing the pain. The "halo" around the screen is dark. Let the memory play itself out. (If the images are difficult, you might ask your Master Teacher to join you. Master Teachers are great for holding hands, giving comfort, and instilling courage.)

Then let the image fade. Let the white light around the screen glow brightly. Then see the same scene *the way you wanted it to be*. What do you wish had happened? See it. What do you wish you had said? Hear yourself saying it. How do you wish others had responded? See them responding that way. What would you like to have felt? Feel that.

Replacing a negative memory with a positive one heals it.

You can also use your health center. Perhaps there is a special memory-healing device or magic elixir or a master with a touch that heals. Whatever you wish medical science had that would heal the past, imagine it in your health center, and use it.

If the hurt involves other people, you can invite them into your sanctuary. Under the guidance and protection of your Master Teacher, you can tell them whatever it is you want them to know, forgive them (and yourself), and let them go into that pure, white light of the people mover.

There's no need to dwell on the past, remembering every little painful detail and then healing it. Just heal what surfaces on its own, and move on with your life--your present.

Events in the past may be roughly divided into those which probably never happened and those which do not matter.

W. R. INGE DEAN OF ST. PAUL'S, LONDON

Memory, the priestess, kills the present and offers its heart on the shrine of the dead past.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Health

Of one thing I am certain, the body is not the measure of healing--peace is the measure.

GEORGE MELTON

Health is the state about which medicine has nothing to say.

W. H. AUDEN Health is more than just the lack of illness--health

is aliveness, energy, joy.

By always focusing on eliminating illness, few of us learn how to enhance health--or even that enhancing health is possible. It is. You don't have to be sick to get better.

Health is not just for the body. Health includes the mind, the emotions, the whole person. Health is the amount of vibrant, peaceful, loving energy flowing through your being. The more energy, the greater the health.

Let that energy flow in you, through you.

Health is not heavy. Health is light work.

For Giving

God may forgive you, but I never can.

ELIZABETH I 1533-1603

Forgiving means "for giving"--*in favor of* giving.

When you forgive another, to whom do you give? The other? Sometimes. Yourself? Always. To forgive another is being in favor of giving to yourself.

In addition, most of us judge ourselves more harshly and more often than we judge others. It's important to forgive ourselves for all the things we hold against ourselves.

There is a third judgment to forgive: the fact that we judged in the first place. When we judge, we leave our happiness behind--sometimes way behind. We know this, and we judge ourselves for having judged.

The layers of forgiveness, then, are: first, the person we judged (ourselves or another); and, second, ourselves for having judged in the first place.

The technique? Simple.

Say to yourself, "I forgive _____ (NAME OF THE PERSON, PLACE, OR THING YOU JUDGED, INCLUDING YOURSELF) for _____ (THE `TRANSGRESSION'). I forgive myself for judging _____ (SAME PERSON, PLACE, OR THING, INCLUDING YOURSELF) for _____ (WHAT YOU JUDGED)."

That's it. Simple, but amazingly effective. You can say it out loud, or say it to yourself.

If you have a lot to forgive one person for, you might want to invite that person into your sanctuary and forgive the person there. (Ask your Master Teacher to come along, if you like.)

That's all there is to forgiveness. Simple but powerful. How powerful? Try it for five minutes. See what happens.

Of course God will forgive me; that's his business.

HEINRICH HEINE LAST WORDS 1856

The American public would forgive me anything except running off with Eddie Fisher.

JACQUELINE KENNEDY 1964

For Getting

Education is what survives when what has been learned has been forgotten.

B. F. SKINNER

After you've forgiven the transgression and judgment, there's only one thing to do: forget them. Whatever "protection" you think you may gain from remembering all your past grievances is far less important than the balm of forgetting.

What's the value in forgetting? It's all in the word: for getting--to be in favor of getting, of receiving.

We sometimes think that shaking a fist (threateningly, with all the remembered transgressions) is the way to get something. A shaking fist tends to beget a shaking (or swinging) fist.

To receive, for give. To get, for get.

Remembering a grievance locks you into remembering hurt, pain, anger, betrayal, and disappointment. Who on earth wants *that*? Let it go. *For give* it away. Then *for get* something new and better (light-er) in its place.

Heal the memories. Forgive the past. Then forget it. Let it go. It is not worth remembering. None of it's worth remembering. What's worth *experiencing* is the joy of this moment.

Parents

The children despise their parents until the age of forty, when they suddenly become just like them--thus preserving the system.

QUENTIN CREWE

Why, just when we were feeling all joyful, did I have to bring *them* up? Well, they brought *us* up, so, for a moment, allow me to bring *them* up.

It may seem that I have been harsh on parents in this book. When explaining why we feel unworthy, think negatively, or aren't happy, I often returned to the childhood, and there loomed Mom and Dad.

Yes, I am guilty of that, and I now make my amends with these thoughts:

1. Your childhood is over. *You* are now in charge of your life. You can't blame the past--or anyone in it--for what you do *today*. Even if you can formulate a convincing argument to the contrary, it does you no good. Your childhood is gone. It's past.

Blaming the past is like blaming gravity for the glass you broke. Yes, without gravity, the glass would not have fallen. But you *know* about gravity and you *know* about glasses and you *know* what happens when you combine gravity, a falling glass, and a hard surface.

Your childhood is like gravity. It was what it was. Your life today is like the glass. Handle it with care. If it breaks, clean up the mess, and get another glass (your life tomorrow) from the cupboard.

1 Your parents did the best they could with what they knew. Like you, your parents weren't given an instruction manual for life. They had to learn it as they went along. They had to learn how to make a living, run a home, get along with each other, and raise a baby (you) all at the same time. No easy task. Along the way, they made lots of mistakes. They weren't the perfect parents. But, let's face it, you weren't the perfect child, either.

2 How you turned out is mostly a result of genetics anyway.

3 Your parents gave you the greatest gift of all: Life. Whatever else they did or didn't do, if not for them, you wouldn't be here. They deserve a big thank-you for that.

You don't have to *like* your parents. But it feels better if you learn to love them.

My mother had a great deal of trouble with me, but I think she enjoyed it.

MARK TWAIN

If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that David Copperfield kind of crap, but I don't feel like going into it.

J. D. SALINGER
CATCHER IN THE RYE

Laughter

Laugh. Out loud. Often.

Laughter is inner jogging.

NORMAN COUSINS

Laughter's good for you--which may be too bad. If it raised the cholesterol count or had too many calories, people might do it more often. If laughter were only *forbidden*, then people would do it all the time. We'd have laugh police. If they caught you laughing, they'd write you a ticket.

Children's TV programming would have to be monitored very carefully. We wouldn't want anyone pushing humor on innocent young minds. "What are you kids doing in there?" "We're drinking beer and smoking cigarettes." "Okay, but no laughing."

Pop Quiz! Which is funniest:

- A. "I was gratified to be able to answer promptly. I said I don't know." (Mark Twain)
- B. "Aristotle was famous for knowing everything. He taught that the brain exists merely to cool the blood and is not involved in the process of thinking. This is true only of certain persons." (Will Cuppy)
- C. "The school of hard knocks is an accelerated curriculum." (Menander)
- D. "I knew I was an unwanted baby when I saw that my bath toys were a toaster and a radio." (Joan Rivers)
- E. "My parents put a live Teddy bear in my crib." ([Woody Allen](#))
- F. "Never lend your car to anyone to whom you have given birth." (Erma Bombeck)

G. Life is like laughing with a cracked rib.

Tears

*Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean, Tears from the depth of some divine despair Rise in the heart,
and gather to the eyes, In looking on the happy autumn fields, And thinking of the days that are no more.*

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON 1847

Crying, like laughing, is a marvelous, natural release. People feel *so good* after a cry, I wonder why it's such a taboo.

People come pouring out of a movie theater, sniffing and dripping--you'd think they'd set off a tear gas canister. You ask them, "What happened?" fully expecting the story of a disaster. They sob, "That was the best movie I ever saw." (One wants to remind them that the correct grammar necessitates, "That was the best movie I *have* ever *seen* ," but they seem so upset already.)

Tears are natural to healing *and* enjoying. Intense feelings of gratitude, awe, and compassion are often accompanied by tears. "Moved to tears," as they say.

Allow yourself to be moved by your life, not just the movies.

Wealth

To live content with small means; to seek elegance rather than luxury, and refinement rather than fashion; to be worthy, not respectable, and wealthy, not rich; to study hard, think quietly, talk gently, act frankly; to listen to stars and birds, to babes and sages, with open heart; to bear all cheerfully, do all bravely, await occasions, hurry never. In a word, to let the spiritual, unbidden and unconscious, grow up through the common. This is to be my symphony.

WILLIAM HENRY CHANNING 1810-1884

Unlike money, wealth is not just what you have. Wealth is what you can do without. Who is wealthier, the person who is addicted to something and has plenty of money to buy it, or the person who doesn't desire the addictive substance at all? Wealthy people carry their riches within. The less they need of this physical world, the wealthier they are. They may or may not have large sums of money. It matters not. Whatever they have is fine. Wealth is health, happiness, abundance, prosperity, riches, loving, caring, sharing, learning, knowing what we want, opportunity, enjoying, and balance. Wealth is enjoying one's own company. Wealth is being able to love oneself fully. *WEALTH 101: Wealth Is Much More Than Money*. At your local bookstore, or call 1-800-LIFE

101.

Sacrifice

Don't go to piano bars where young, unemployed actors get up and sing. Definitely don't be a young, unemployed actor who gets up and sings.

TONY LANG

You would be far happier if you gave up certain things. This may not be easy for you. I nonetheless suggest you give them up--go cold turkey--starting right now, this minute, before you turn the page.

Give is a nice word. *Up* is a nice word. Put them together, and people can get awfully nasty. "I'm not going to give up *anything* . And *sacrifice*. That's even *worse* than giving up. Sacrifice means giving up something *really* good."

Maybe not. I think you'd be better off sacrificing greed, lust, hurt, judgments, demands, spoiledness, envy, jealousy, vindictiveness.

Did you think I was going to ask you to give up *good* stuff? Most people think that sacrifice means giving up *only* the good stuff. Not so. The negative stuff, the cold stuff, the hard stuff-you can sacrifice those, too.

And you can give them *up*. Surrender them to the higher part of yourself. Surround them with light. Let them go.

You don't need them anymore.

Service

The idea that life is take, take, take (learn, learn, learn) needs to be balanced with the idea that life is also giving (teaching). Receiving and giving (learning and teaching) are two parts of a single flow, like breathing in (receiving) and breathing out (giving). One cannot take place without the other.

The Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea are made of the same water. It flows down, clear and cool, from the heights of Hermon and the roots of the cedars of Lebanon. The Sea of Galilee makes beauty of it, for the Sea of Galilee has an outlet. It gets to give. It gathers in its riches that it may pour them out again to fertilize the Jordan plain. But the Dead Sea with the same water makes horror. For the Dead Sea has no outlet. It gets to keep.

HARRY EMERSON FOSDICK *THE MEANING OF SERVICE* 1920

We inhale oxygen and exhale carbon dioxide. Plants absorb the carbon dioxide and release oxygen. The cycle is complete. This connection between giving and receiving is fundamental to life.

What is waste to animals is essential to plants, and vice versa. Our own taking from and giving to life is just as intimately connected.

We seem to be students of those who know more than we do, doers with those who know just about as much as we do, and teachers of those who know less than we do. Life is a process of doing, learning, enjoying, *and* teaching.

In ten minutes on the job, you might learn how to transfer a call on the new phone system, consult with a co-worker on a method for increasing sales, and teach someone how to load paper into the copy machine. And this learning-doing-teaching can take place with the same person.

This learning-doing-teaching happens in almost every area of life--and all three often happen simultaneously. The child we are teaching to read and write is, in the same moment, teaching us innocence and wonder.

When we give a stranger directions, why do we feel so good? Because giving is a natural part of life. If we're lost and somebody puts us on the right track, that feels good, too. Receiving is also a natural part of life.

Boy: Teach me what you know, Jim. Reverend Jim: That would take hours, Terry. Ah, what the heck! We've all got a little Obi Wan Kenobie in us.

Taxi

When we learn to give to ourselves so fully that our cup overflows, then we may be called to be of service. Service is not a chore. Service is a privilege.

In truth, giving is not just a natural act; it hurts *not* to give. We see the pain in another, and we want to ease the hurt. We see someone lost, and want to help them find the way.

Sometimes our gift is a hug or a kind word or the right bit of information at the right moment. Perhaps it's a smile or a sigh or a laugh. And maybe you cry with someone--or for them.

There is no need to seek students, just as there is no need to seek lessons. When the teacher is ready, the student appears.

When the server is ready, the service appears.

The Attitude of Gratitude

Tomorrow is the most important thing in life. Comes into us at midnight very clean. It's perfect when it arrives and it puts itself in our hands. It hopes we've learned something from yesterday.

JOHN WAYNE

The word *gratitude* comes from the root *gratus* , which means pleasing. The obvious interpretation is that when you are pleased with something, you are grateful. A second interpretation--the more radical, and therefore the one I prefer--is that when you are grateful, *then* you are pleased, not by the thing, but by the gratitude.

In other words, to feel pleased, be grateful.

We have so much to be grateful for. Alas, it's part of human behavior to take good things for granted. It's biological, actually. A part of our brain filters out whatever isn't hurtful, fearful, or physically moving. This filtering helped our forebears separate the beasts from the rocks and the trees.

Today, this same device starts filtering out all the good things we have, almost as soon as we get them. After a week or month or year with something that initially was *wonderful* , we have grown accustomed to it. We take it for granted.

What to do? Counteract complacency. *Consciously* be grateful for the good in your life. Make lists. Have gratitude flings. Be thankful for little things, big things, every thing.

Let us be thankful for the fools. But for them the rest of us could not succeed.

MARK TWAIN

Appreciate the things that are so magnificent, you took them for granted decades ago. What am I talking about? Your senses. Quick! Name all five! Some people can name the five Great Lakes faster than name their own senses. Let's not forget the brain and the body and the emotions, and walking, talking, thumbs. Thumbs? Sure: Try to pick up some things without using your thumbs.

As Dale Evans once said, "I'm so busy loving *everybody*, I don't have any time to hate *anybody*." When you start noticing even a small portion of all there is to be grateful for, you'll find there's no room for lack, hurt, or want.

The attitude of gratitude: the great, full feeling.

Rest and be thankful.

INSCRIPTION ON A STONE SEAT IN THE SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS

For More Information about the author visit: www.mcwilliams.com