

LIFE

QUICK START GUIDE

RONALD EUGENE CLARK

Table of Contents

Ingredients	1
Things Out of Your Control	6
Health	8
Moods, Especially Funks	10
Balancing Having a Dream and Being Realistic	12
Rest vs. Laziness	14
Habits	15
Diligence	16
Moderation	17
Justice	18
Your Word	20
Selflessness	22
Motives	25
Humor	27
Honesty	29
Humility	34
Kindness	36
Education	38
Problem Solving	43
Work	46
Play	48
Hobbies	50
Faith	51
Love	53
Hope	55
Partner	57
Parents	60
Grandparents	61

Children	63
Friends	64
Listening vs. Hearing	66
Perspective	67
Patience	68
Driving & Common Courtesy	70
Disasters, Emergencies, Deaths, Inheritances, etc.	72
Priorities	73

Ingredients

The ingredients for the recipe to living a life where you:

- are happy
- are personally fulfilled
- respect others
- are respected by others
- live a life of positive change around you
- are loved by others
- love others
- have a sense of family for the people around you
- accomplish things that are personally rewarding

The specific ingredients are listed in most of the titles of the remaining chapters. Some of the titles are simply the subject of the chapter. The text includes the qualifiers for the subject that gives the guidelines in that area of your life. Education is one of those, while selflessness speaks for itself.

This is a good point to let you know one thing I firmly believe. Here is my best illustration. What is written on a tombstone? Typically, it is something to the effect of “Good Father and Husband.” Well that sucks! An entire lifetime summed up into a few words. I am in the process of putting up a website right now that details my life in stories and pictures. On my tombstone, it’s going to read “Goto Ronald_E_Clark.com for details”. Ha!

We all say things that are quite easy to speak, but incredibly complicated to take action on. Or it is the summary of hundreds of hours of dedication and hard work. When someone says, “I play the piano,” there is usually years invested in that endeavor, but it all was summed up into four short words. If you play golf, how many hours have you enjoyed to get to be comfortable with the statement, “I play golf,”? Well, golf might actually be a bad illustration. There are many of us who play the game, but kind of don’t really enjoy it about 50% of the time.

The point is, pay attention to the true meaning behind those simple, easy to say statements. They really can tell you a great deal about the speaker. Listen and give them the weight they deserve, rather than the casual phrase that you might brush off.

Here is the number one phrase spoken casually every minute of every day by someone that is in return heard and casually received, “I love you.” What a pity. It is probably the single most important thing anyone can say.

Of course, there are different kinds of love. And I am speaking generally about all the different variations behind the three words. Here is an interesting twist on the casualness that is good. One might say those words to a spouse or partner, whatever, and it has become a habit. That habit might ground you to your wonderful relationship constantly. How nice.

Break.

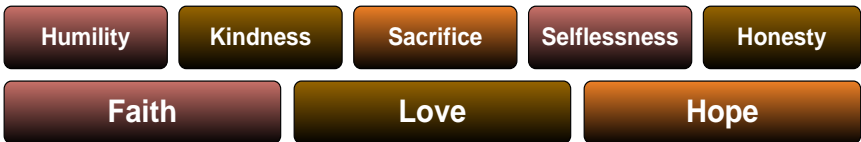
I just went on for 333 words about the importance of words. Here are just 16 to summarize; Think about what you are hearing AND saying, don’t blather and LISTEN as you are hearing.

Return to first paragraph:

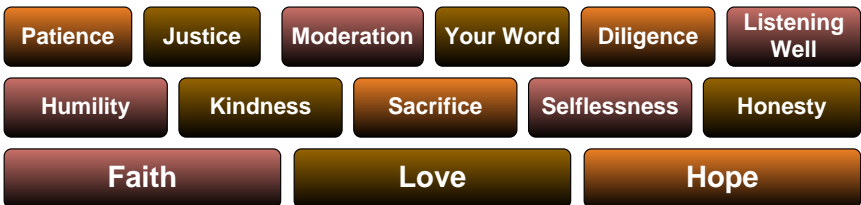
The ingredients to a successful and happy life start with a foundation of these things:



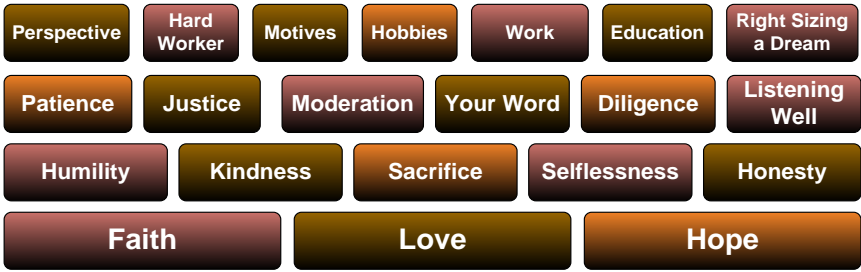
Then the next tier can be added and always supported by the foundation:



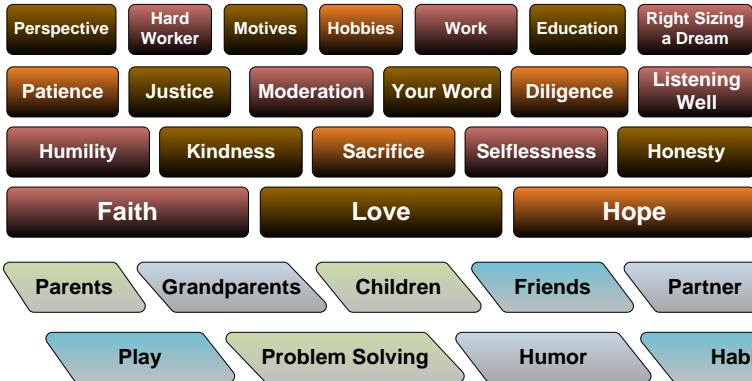
With this strong second layer, even more attributes are realized:



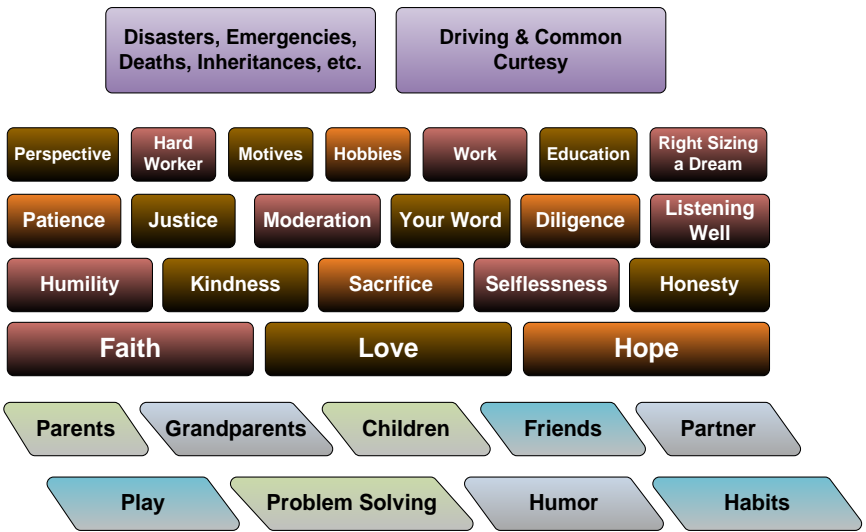
And this tier spawns still another set of items in your personality:



This wall is strong being developed by support of more fundamental personal attributes. Then, this solid wall reflects how you treat loved ones and how you handle some other important items.

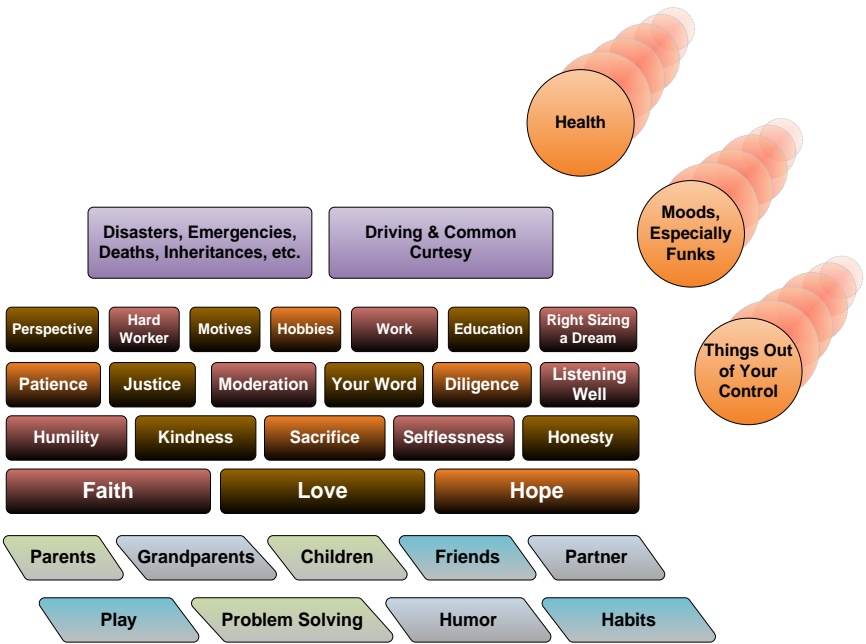


All these things have several very real indicators of how you are doing on your path towards happiness:



The two indicators may seem odd at first glance. But, trust me, they are excellent ways to check how you are living. Of course, they will be explained in their chapters. You will understand then.

Now there are external forces at work trying to bring down your personality “wall”. They end up being indicators as well.



That’s it. Complicated to say the least. But, your personality is complicated. Don’t worry about understanding the graphic too well at this point. You will see it again with descriptions that will make everything clear. Explaining all this is a work in progress as you read on, just as your personality is. And trust me, it is. You will always be changing, adapting, growing. The real driver is time. Time marches on, as they say, and so do you.

“...just another brick in the wall.”

Things Out of Your Control

There really isn't much to say about this. They exist and always will. The universe has its forces and they hit us all the time. It's how you react that matters. But the one I want to focus on is the people in your life that you can't control. You typically are forced to interact with them just as they are doing things that do not align with your wishes.

Here's what most people do in this circumstance, they get upset. Of course, it depends on what is going on to what degree they get upset. But even a little is not pleasant. Here are the simple rules that should govern your actions depending on your level of authority.

Your three-year-old daughter bit you. You take the necessary action to train her not to do it again. If it is harsh words or mild corporal punishment, you must come down to their level to make it effective. I am really big on a swat on the diaper. It makes a loud noise, but pads the impact. It is supposed to show disappointment to the child. Here's the take away lesson: **DO NOT CHASTISE A BABY IN ANGER.** It's a baby! You are not!

Your fifteen-year-old son got busted for smoking pot at school. You are called to the school. You are pissed. This is a tough one. He needs to see you angry. But how deep is your anger? If it eats at your soul, it is too much. You know what I mean. Here is the take away here, and it's a bad one: **FIND A WAY TO CONTROL YOUR ANGER.** It is usually a bad idea to take any action in anger. Regret inevitably follows. Start by recognizing that you are **TOO** angry. Recognizing anger itself is easy if you are actively trying to control it. Once you identify that you are in the state of being too angry, reach into your personality and find enough of the serenity that is normally present and use it. Take some physical action to help it along. Breathe deep, close your eyes for a few seconds (not while you are driving to the school), try to remember your son as a smaller child. **CALM DOWN.** You are an adult, probably.

When I see anger and am asked for advice, I always council to wait and calm down. Then I look for the kindest way to deal with it. That's right, kindness. Kindness should always be your first reaction to anything, shouldn't it? Here's a very real example. You have a daughter in law who is wonderful.

She loves your son and you love her. It is very easy to do nice things for her. But you have a son in law who is a jerk. You have never really liked him and he is not always as kind to your daughter as you would like. It is hard to do nice things for him. Here's the take away on this one: **KEEP DOING NICE THINGS FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT NICE.** Really a tough one, but train yourself. It is one of the main foundation stones in your wall of being happy. It is most essential that you hold fast to this challenge. It is very rewarding eventually. It sits right beside the most essential element to happiness, selflessness.

Don't stop reading just because I gave you the answer to ultimate happiness. Selflessness needs support from Love, Faith and Hope.

“Anger is an acid that can do more harm to the vessel in which it is stored than to anything on which it is poured” Mark Twain

Health

Your health is in large degree controlled by you. You exercise, you eat right, and you watch your health, period. But, eventually, you will have a health related issue that is not in your control. Here is the answer to this one: Faith.

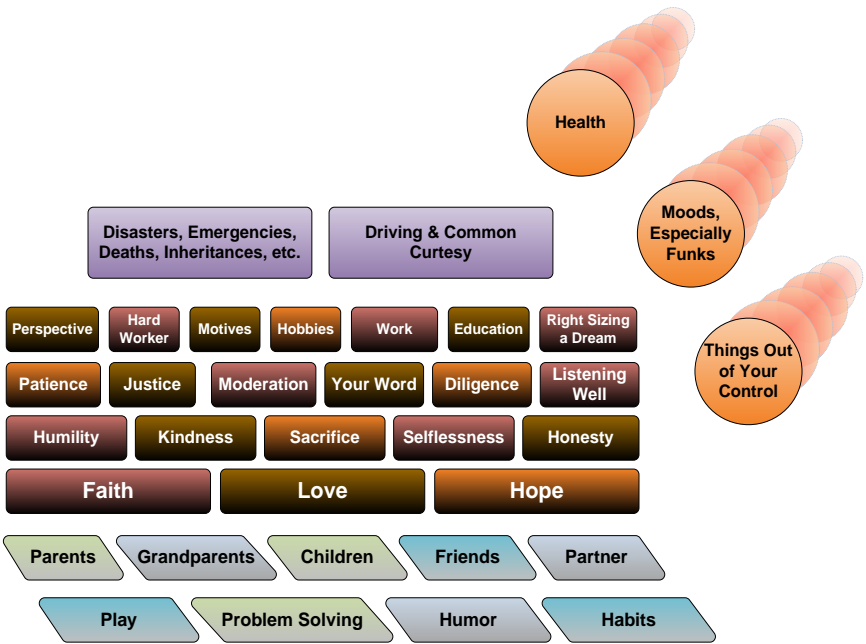
Turn this and perhaps other things out of your control over to what or whoever you believe is in control. Turn it loose and have faith that the controller of the universe is going to take care of you, whether you like it or not.

Having said this, let's touch base with practicality. You need to participate in your healthiness. You need to seek the right medical help, pay attention to what is required of you and follow through on the professional advice. It's the old phrase about being adrift on a large body of water, "Pray to God, but row for shore."

On the other side of practicality is faith. Miracles do happen. I've seen someone beat the medical odds and consider their recovery a miracle. Why not?

But having faith is a huge challenge for some people, while for others it is always present. Faith is very childlike. It is easier to have if you were taught it as a child. There is a whole chapter coming on faith, but remember, worrying over things out of your control is a waste of time. Never forget that time is a very, very precious commodity.

Let's take another look at the main diagram



Look at the things trying wreck your happiness. The foundations and other strong parts of your personality (or new personality) protect your happiness. Have faith in me that I am right (ha ha).

Here is the take away for this chapter; Enjoy good health, if you have it. If not, appreciate that you are at least alive.

Life is 10% of what happens to you and 90% of how you react to it.

Moods, Especially Funks

We've all been hit by hormones at some point in our lives where they controlled us to the point of us thinking, "Why am I acting like this?" The teenage years come to mind for men in particular while poor women deal with a barrage of them every month typically. These chemicals drive our emotions in directions we would rather not go, but have no power to stop the ride. Or so we think. You'll hear this tidbit of a lesson throughout this book; the first thing to do is recognize what is happening. *Learn* to recognize it. You know what it feels like. The next time it happens, take note of it. This is the first step in stopping it from controlling you. This is common sense. It's a fundamental rule of logic and many disciplines. Define the problem before you define a solution. It's kind of like what is said in the book "The Art of War" about knowing your enemy.

So good, you will soon recognize that you are in one of these out of control moods and now you ask the question, "So what do I do about it?" First of all, if it serious enough, you need to seek professional help. There are medications that help, especially with the physical side of the challenge. Once you have worked through that, should the need be great enough, there is something that will help. It's the same answer given in the previous two chapters about other things out of your control. Turn it over to whatever you believe controls the universe. For me personally, that means praying to God to take charge and help.

I've heard exercises that are supposed to help, like imagining a box and putting those awful feelings in it. Then you imagine burying the box and putting your problem behind you. You must personally decide what works best for you. There is no specific answer to this issue. I like to have an attitude of "rolling with the punches." That's a boxing metaphor meaning that the punches are going to come no matter what. So expect them and move with them as they come to soften the blow. Again, an easy thing to say and a hard thing to do. But you can train yourself. Boxers do, so why can't you mentally prepare yourself for the next time you are at the mercy of something you cannot control.

You really can make these bad things easier the next time by recognizing them and then using your personal training to react to them in a way that lessens their impact.

“Give me strength to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”

Balancing Having a Dream and Being Realistic

This chapter fell in this order, but may actually stand alone in a book all to itself. People have a dream they aspire to all the time and it is a life-long goal for many. It deserves more than I can devote to the subject in just a few pages. But, I am going to give it a try because it is another essential part of your personality.

I have had many dreams in my life. I have started and failed many enterprises. But I still keep trying. Am I foolish and should I stop? Or is it the process that is important? I'm looking for that one thing that takes off and makes me rich and famous. Actually not rich and famous, but successful, a big difference. I think the best example I can give you is this one; I am an inventor. I see problems and think up cool solutions to solve the problem. I have patents that I will never see any profit from. I wasted a lot of time, energy and money. My latest idea is Self-Tying Shoe Laces. Sounds silly doesn't it. But, I really have a design that will work. If I explained it to you, you would go, "Oh, I get it. Hey, that might really be a good idea. It's not silly at all."

Enough about me, let's talk about your dreams. Here is a common one for young people, I want to be a star. It can be in any area. They might want to win a gold medal in the Olympics or be a singer or dancer (choose any performance art). Here is a good solid rule to follow when you have a dream like the examples I just put forth. In order to be that good at anything, you must invest the time it takes to get that good.

A music major in college taking a performance major like playing the violin is required to practice about 6 hours a day. I guesstimate that will be a total investment of about 2000 hours. Olympians tell stories of constant, grueling practice for years to get to where they are. Whenever I think about it, one phrase comes to mind, "you gotta pay your dues if you want to sing the blues." Somewhat applicable, but the point is the investment in time it takes to be really good at anything.

Here's depressing fact about being a performance musician. So, you go through college and get a degree in playing the trombone and you turn out pretty darn good. Guess what? Your college cranks out pretty darn good trombone players by the dozens. And there are only so many seats in a professional symphony orchestra. Where do these people end up? Teaching. Almost all of them want to be professional musician, playing beautiful music and getting paid

for it. Somewhere along the line, they realized that they need to have an income and teaching music is still music after all. So, they get their teaching credentials and hope to play gigs in the night until they get their break and don't have to teach anymore. The vast majority are still teachers and pretty darn good at it. It wasn't their dream to begin with. It is a fallback position.

Here's another example worth discussion. It's at the other end of the spectrum from what we just talked about. Hitting the lottery. There are millions of people playing the game with the hope of hitting the big one. All that cash would solve all their problems. And that is the extent of their dream. Have they actually looked at the odds? That dream is a game to most, but to a few, it is an addiction. It feels to me like a very bad dream to have.

Here's something in the middle: You want to start a restaurant. You have experience in the area. You were a manager of a fine, thriving restaurant for ten years. You saw all the goods *and* bads of that establishment and you know you could do better. You clearly realize that most restaurants fail. You understand the location requirement and the affluence level of your target customers. Excellent. Proceed.

Here's the take away: Have dreams, but perhaps you should temper your selection with a large dose of reality.

This is a good place to talk about another feeling; regret. Regret is a tool for your education. And should be nothing more. Learn the lesson it is giving and throw it away quickly. Regret will do nothing but eat you from the inside out.

This chapter earns two sayings due to its complexity. I feel like I have been quite negative when speaking about your dreams. I certainly don't mean to be. So please temper my advice with the following sayings;

“Hold fast to your dream.”

“Regret is for losers.”

Rest vs. Laziness

It is important physically to get the rest your body needs. Everyone has different requirements so everyone's habits are quite varied. I personally recommend that you minimize your sleep time and turn the extra time into productive time. I sleep very little, but I sure get a lot done. Or at least I think I do. Let's move on.

Most of us know someone who sleeps a lot. I'm talking about an adult. Children need a lot of rest so they don't count in this chapter's discussion. The person I am thinking of comes home from a day of manual labor around 4 pm, sleeps until around 9 pm, gets up and has dinner and goes back to bed. What a small life to lead. I'm pretty sure my example has psychological problems and the sleep thing is just a symptom.

I can sum up the take away in this chapter with a comment that relates to the Puritan Ethic. Hard work brings honor to God. Of course, in this case, again, whatever you put your faith in. Here is another way to say it, "Earn your keep." This applies to adults only. Children need to be cared for. Certainly they need to learn that work is important and expected. Assigning chores at an early age will build that character very nicely.

Earn your keep in society as well as your family and friends. Certainly there are times when public assistance programs help those in need. Relying on it as a constant state of existence is another thing all together. In my opinion, our society has crossed over that assistance line and has become a welfare state for many. Very sad.

Here is the take away; you have a moral responsibility to work hard and contribute to society.

This chapter has two sayings because I like both of them.

"I'm a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work the more I have of it." Thomas Jefferson

"There's plenty of time to sleep when you're dead." (James Bond movie)

Habits

Some habits are good. Some habits are bad. Let's touch base on the good ones first.

Brushing your teeth is a good habit. Doing things in repetition can turn them into habits. Anything. It is important to recognize good habits and cultivate them in your life. This realization will help when we look at bad habits. Because it is MORE important to recognize bad habits and stop them.

At this point, we need to make a distinction between bad habits and addictions. Addictions are usually both physical and mental. Certainly the balance is different with every circumstance. There are clear addictions and the best example is drugs. These can be both prescribed and illegal. Either way, they need to be dealt with. A professional's help is usually required, while some people may have the inner strength and fortitude to escape the addiction.

I personally have been addicted to prescription pain meds after recuperating from surgeries. I had to work with the physician to ease off the meds and get clean. The mental aspect of an addiction can be more difficult to deal with than the physical.

People can be addicted to anything almost, food, sex, TV, anything. These kinds of addictions are usually bad habits gone wild. They too, may require professional help. I hope you don't tire of hearing this, but again, the first step in dealing with these negative parts of your personality is to recognize them.

Here is the take away for this chapter; Bad habits and addictions make you a slave to them. You should not be slave to anything. You should strive to control your life, not let things control you. Of course, you can only control your life up to a point as we talked about at length in the previous chapters.

“First we form habits, then they form us. Conquer your bad habits or they will conquer you.”

Diligence

For the purposes of this discussion, I am going to define diligence as good hard work followed through to the end with the absence of procrastination. A mouthful to be sure, but precise and complete nonetheless. By the way, just to be clear, diligence is a good thing.

There are lots of phrases that support my definition in part at least.

- Keep dreaming and wishing or put in the hard work and determination that make dreams a reality.
- Diligence is the mother of good fortune.
- The reward of a work is to have produced it; the reward of effort is to have grown by it.
- Stay the course.
- Hold fast.

I threw in the last two. I like the simplicity of them. Here is one more; finish what you start. And by the way, don't start what you can't finish.

In the story of the Three Little Pigs, only one builds his house out of solid materials. And that house survived while the other ones of straw and sticks did not. This is a child's story copied from the Bible in the book of Matthew 7:24-27 about building your house on shifting sand. It took hard work for the third pig to build his house.

The second part of my definition of diligence says to follow through to the end. That means to complete your work. We all have stopped short of completing a task because we were distracted, tired, forgetful, or otherwise hampered from finishing. Remember how that feels. It sucks. It nags. It makes us dislike ourselves because we disappointed our self (unless you are just callous to it now and don't think twice about not completing work or a project).

If you don't care that you don't complete something, then pay very hard and close attention to the chapter on Work.

Here's the take away. Be diligent in every good work you do.

And here's a silly phrase to end this chapter (silly, but still good advice).

Keep on keepin' on.

Moderation

The opposite of moderation is Excess. Somewhere in between is consumption. Here is a bold statement; **anything in excess is bad.**

Drinking too much water, too quickly can kill. Jumping out of a plane without a parachute will kill from the excess of gravity. There are the obvious ones we all live with, alcohol, illegal drugs and prescription drugs. We may not consume them, but we have been effected by someone who does.

I am not saying that drinking alcohol is a bad thing. Drinking it to excess is indeed a bad thing and can be a *very, very* bad thing. Alcohol is a conundrum. Here is an exercise in logic:

Booze impairs judgment. After you start drinking, you should decide to stop when you are crossing over some line. However, since, by definition, your judgment is impaired, how can you tell when to stop?

The right thing to do is to set a limit before you start. Someone close to me drinks in quiet moderation. Two drinks a night is the limit, but usually only one is consumed. And there is no driving after any at all. The taste is the delight, not getting drunk or even high.

A life of moderation should deter addiction and even bad habits. If we had ever thought about it, we would realize that living a life where things are enjoyed in moderation is the right way to live. If you have never thought about it, this chapter was for you.

Here is the take away; Life is not a beer commercial. Enjoy life in moderation.

“The man who makes everything that leads to happiness depends upon himself, and not upon other men, has adopted the very best plan for living happily. This is the man of moderation, the man of manly character and of wisdom.” Plato

Justice

My definition of justice is fairness and equality. When a choice is put in front of us, will we do the *fair* thing? And will we do it the same no matter what circumstances we are in or whom we are dealing with. Piece of cake. HA!!! It's really hard to be "just" all the time.

But, here's an easy example; when I get change for buying something, if the change is incorrect, I correct it with the cashier. I did not say in whose favor the error was because that shouldn't matter if you are "just" in your dealings.

Let's backup, how can you know what is "fair" or "just" or "right"? The answer actually is quite simple. You get an education. And guess what, that is a whole subject in another chapter. In lieu of having you put this book down, I will give you a short and powerful education in a few pages by quoting a couple of really smart people.

"Nothing is to be preferred before Justice." Socrates

Justice is the firm and continuous desire to render to everyone, that which is his due.

Justice n. 1) fairness. 2) Moral rightness. 3) A scheme or system of law in which every person receives his/her/it's due from the system, including all rights, both natural and legal. One problem is that attorneys, judges, and legislatures often get caught up more in procedure than in achieving justice for all. Example: the adage "justice delayed is justice denied," applies to the burdensome procedures, lack of sufficient courts, clogging the system with meritless cases, and the use of the courts to settle matters which could be resolved by negotiation. The imbalances between court privileges obtained by attorneys for the wealthy and for the person of modest means, the use of delay and "blizzards" of unnecessary paper by large law firms, and judges who fail to cut through the underbrush of procedure all erode justice. 4) An appellate judge, the Chief Justice and Associate Justices of the U. S. Supreme Court, a member of a Federal Court of Appeal, and judges of any of the various state appellate courts.

In the context of conflict, the terms 'justice' and 'fairness' are often used interchangeably.

Taken in its broader sense, justice is action in accordance with the requirements of some law.[1] Some maintain that justice stems from God's will or command, while others believe that justice is inherent in nature itself. Still others believe that justice consists of rules common to all humanity that emerges out of some sort of consensus. This sort of justice is often thought of as something higher than a society's legal system. It is in those cases where an action seems to violate some universal rule of conduct that we are likely to call it "unjust."

In its narrower sense, justice is fairness. It is action that pays due regard to the proper interests, property, and safety of one's fellows.[2] While justice in the broader sense is often thought of as transcendental, justice as fairness is more context-bound. Parties concerned with fairness typically strive to work out something comfortable and adopt procedures that resemble rules of a game. They work to ensure that people receive their "fair share" of benefits and burdens and adhere to a system of "fair play."

The principles of justice and fairness can be thought of as rules of "fair play" for issues of social justice. Whether they turn out to be grounded in universal laws or ones that are more context-bound, these principles determine the way in which the various types of justice are carried out. For example, principles of distributive justice determine what counts as a "fair share" of particular good, while principles of retributive or restorative justice shape our response to activity that violates a society's rules of "fair play." Social justice requires both that the rules be fair, and also that people play by the rules.

I could not have said it better myself. But, I can sum up the take away; Be fair in all you do. And look for unfairness and try to correct it.

Truth, Justice and the American Way

Your Word

This title really means honoring your word, what you say. A handshake is the same way if given as a sign of agreement that usually is considered to be an informal contract.

Many people say they are going to do something and do not actually do it. And they don't seem to care that they did not do it. Most unpleasant. My profession requires that I follow through on what I say I will do. But that is beside the point. What does your word mean to you? Do you say things lightly with no intention of following up? Or does your word mean everything to you?

The word “integrity” comes to mind when I think about keeping your word. “Honor” is another. These words probably need a separate chapter for each, but since they are talked about in detail in existing chapters, that will do. Honor has a key place in the chapter on Honesty. But integrity should be discussed right now in this chapter.

Integrity is the line between right and wrong drawn somewhere in your brain. Everybody has one. It defines your moral compass. You are keeping your integrity if you don't cross the line. The problem is that your line and mine are different. And then the laws of the land are probably different as well. To make matters even more complicated, everyone's line changes. So that brings us back to the difference between right and wrong in general.

We've touched on right and wrong in previous chapters and things should be falling into those sides more clearly with every chapter. This concept is key to almost all of the chapter subjects.

There is one very important addition to keeping your word and that is being on time to scheduled events. If you agree to attend a meeting and do not show up at all, that is an obvious breach of commitment. Being late is the same. Being punctual should be your mantra in planning your time. Being late is rude and often costly while others wait. At work, time is money.

Here is the take away; Keep your word, keep your appointments and honor a handshake agreement.

Do those simple things and you will be perceived as a person of integrity.

“If a man... swears an oath to bind himself by a pledge, he shall not break his word. He shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.” Moses

Selflessness

This is a very, very important chapter. Selflessness means to put other ahead of yourself. Stop being selfish and think of the other person's happiness before you think about your own. Easier said than done. (I knew I would use that phrase somewhere in this book.)

A person is brought into the world with selfishness imbedded in their personality. It must be for that little miracle to survive. It is the ten puppies and mom only has eight nipples thing. They fight for the nipple. It's survival instinct. Small children eventually must be taught to be unselfish.

Many parents fail with that lesson. We've all suffered with that failure in restaurants or on airplanes.

But, you are probably an adult or close to it and should know what I am talking about. So, what's so important about this concept. The first defined thought I had on it was when I read quotes from people about being happy and this was the clear winner in the sayings by far. Wealthy people at the end of their life will tell you that true happiness does not come from money or power, it comes from helping others. Most older people with families will tell you that the greatest joy they have is their grandchildren. They put those little people ahead of themselves as a common priority. They "sacrifice" their betterment for making those kids happy.

To many, this feels like a conundrum. A conundrum is a question or problem having only a conjectural answer. I think of it as a circular logic argument and that helps me. Here is the challenging argument specifically laid out; "Why would making others happy make me happy? And why shouldn't putting my happiness first make me happy?" These are pretty reasonable questions.

Again, let's look to what some pretty bright people have said about this in the past.

"It's that wonderful old-fashioned idea that others come first and you come second. This was the whole ethic by which I was brought up. Others matter more than you do, so 'don't fuss, dear; get on with it.'" Audrey Hepburn

“We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.” Apostle Paul

“We are formed and molded by our thoughts. Those whose minds are shaped by selfless thoughts give joy when they speak or act. Joy follows them like a shadow that never leaves them.” Buddha

“Selfless service alone gives the needed strength and courage to awaken the sleeping humanity in one’s heart.” Sri Sathva Sai Baba

“Behold I do not give lectures or a little charity, when I give I give myself”
Walt Whitman

“Life is an exciting business, and most exciting when it is lived for others.”
Helen Keller

It is clear from the common feeling on this subject that most of the world thinks that it is a good thing to aspire to. So how in the world will making others happy make me happy? For starters, it feels good. It feels good down to the root of your soul if you pay attention.

But, here is the cool thing about it. If you act this way to others, others start to act this way to you back. And it builds like a snowball headed downhill.

Here’s the take away for this chapter; doing things selflessly spreads goodwill among people and with goodwill spreading around you, your life becomes full.

So, in a strange way, being selfless ends up being selfish because it ultimately makes you happy. But that is an issue with Motives or is it? Read on (after the chapter end quote).

This is a couple of lines from a song by Judy Collins about the terrorist attacks on September 11th 2011. It seems fitting that this tribute be used for this subject. The sacrifice of these heroes’ ultimately saved so many lives.

***For all our gifts for all our hopes
For all our nameless fears
For all our heroes, men and women
Lost on that black day
Those firemen with courage
In their hearts so strong and brave,
Who made sure in their final hours
There were 30,000 saved.***

Motives

Why do we do what we do? What factors weigh the heaviest when we make a decision? Most decisions are light and easy with little or no adverse consequences when the choice is wrong. Like deciding what meal to eat at a restaurant. Many however, are serious.

Here an insight I gained only a few short years ago; Selfless and selfish people often look and act the same. They might be hard to tell apart.

A nurse at your doctor's office is polite, professional and good at what she does. Another nurse, a man, is also polite, professional and good. One has a genuine heart for helping people while the other has only their career (and the money it brings) as their goal. So, who's to say which is better since the outcome for the patients is the same. I will; the selfless person. The one's who's MOTIVE'S are out of concern for others above self. This person will have the best chance at happiness while the career and cash minded individual would find out someday, they had it backwards.

So, what's it to you if you can't tell the difference between the selfless and selfish person? If they look and act the same, how could you tell anyway? It's everything to you. Or it should be. The person I am describing with the selfish motive is a liar and con artist, even if it is only to themselves.

There is something we need to talk about now. It is the "front" that we all project. Everybody has one or many. Nobody doesn't think about what they are going to wear to work. Everyone puts on their costume. The real me wears a swimsuit and sandals. To some of my work places, I wear a suit and tie or a jacket and tie. It is my Project Manager costume. Does that make me a phony? I would hope not. But it is a persona I wish to display to those necessary work places and associates.

Here is some advice; be aware that people judge you by how you look. Be careful to dress and look appropriately for your situation. And if you have the choice, try to dress and look the most "real". Reflect your personality as much as you can. Why not? You are a very special individual. Show it to people in an honest way and you will be respected for it. Maybe not instantly, but in the long run for sure. And don't forget the old saying, "You only get one chance to make a first impression." It really is true.

Motives are hard to guess in a lot of people. Others are transparent and obvious. Watching for patterns in how people act can be very telling. Later on there is a chapter about special circumstances like emergencies. How people react in those situations often reveals their true selves.

My in-laws owned a home in Northridge, California and were dead center of the Northridge Earthquake in 1994. Their home was destroyed, but no one was injured. I watched a 30-year-old man crumble into being worthless just when he was needed most. And I watched a 40-year-old woman step up and take charge most unexpectedly. Surprise, surprise, literally.

I have found the most telling situation is over the estate of a loved one who has died. Man oh man, do people show their true colors when there is cash or stuff to be had.

Here is the take away for this chapter; watch for signs of the true motivation in people and make sure that your motives for all your actions are correct.

“We should often be ashamed of our finest actions if the world understood all the motives behind them.” Francois VI Duc de La Rochefoucauld

Humor

Why is there a chapter on Humor? Finding things funny is a learned trait using twists in words that surprise. What does that have to do with happiness? A lot.

Finding humor in things at the appropriate time and “level” will help keep you focused on the things that matter. Whether you believe in a maker of this universe or that it was created by accident, there is plenty to find humorous in this world.

Sharing a humorous event with another person builds comradery between associates, turns acquaintances in friends, bridges gaps between social walls, and a lot more. However, it may become a negative event if one of the participants feels like they are being the one made fun of. It is a tricky activity if you are strangers. It becomes easier when people are friends.

Here is an interesting observation; throughout history, one universal item has made people laugh, bodily noises. Yes, there are countless descriptions in history. Look at vaudeville from the 1930’s. Burping, sneezing, farting, blowing your nose, snoring, slurping, making armpit farts, stomach gurgling’s, almost any sound made by our bodies can be funny in the right circumstance. You’d think humans would have evolved past this. Oh, well.

Humor keeps us balanced between over the edge seriousness and stupid silliness. Our sense of humor and how it is perceived by others reflects a very big percentage of our personality.

Jokes are a very subjective thing. One person will find a joke hilarious while another will see nothing funny about it. Usually, it is somewhere in between. Here is my current favorite joke:

“A man isn’t feeling well and goes to the doctor. The doctor says that he can’t find anything wrong and must run some tests. He will call in a couple of days with the results. He calls and says to the man, “I’ve got some good news and some bad news. Which would you like first?” The man says that he would like the good news first and the doctor says, “You’ve got 24 hours to live.” The man freaks out and says that if that is the good news, what is the bad news? The doctor says, “I forgot to call you yesterday.”

Here is another from the Three Stooges that I find particularly funny being a carpenter. The boys are fixing up a house and Curly is about to pound a nail into a wall with the point out and the head on the wall. Moe comes up to him

and stops him and tells him, “You knucklehead, that nail is for the other wall.” He points to the wall behind them.

Here, as with many jokes, context is everything. If you had never hit a nail with a hammer, you would not even understand the Three Stooges bit.

Making things even more complicated is that many jokes require an education. Here is one of those.

Jean-Paul Sartre is sitting at a French cafe, revising his draft of Being and Nothingness. He says to the waitress, "I'd like a cup of coffee, please, with no cream." The waitress replies, "I'm sorry, Monsieur, but we're out of cream. How about with no milk?"

Who the hell is Jean-Paul Sartre? Well, he is a rather famous philosopher who wrote a pivotal work in the field called “Being and Nothingness.” It moves western philosophy ahead quite nicely building on the foundations laid by philosophers before him. That is what philosophy is supposed to do.

But if you did not know that, the joke is worthless. But, intellectual jokes can often be told by someone who wants to discover things about the people he is telling the joke to. It can be very telling how people react. Are they reacting to the joke teller, the joke or play-acting the whole time.

Here’s the take away for this chapter; Your sense of humor reveals much about you. Be careful. I know that doesn’t seem like much to take away. I can’t tell you what is funny or not. I can’t teach you humor. I can’t give you a sense of humor. I can give you this additional advice; react conservatively to humorous things. Not politically conservatively, but with quiet peace and reservation always in your heart. Here’s the take away again; Your sense of humor reveals much about you. Be careful to use mayonnaise sparingly.

The ending phrase sums up my take away rather humorously...

It is better to be thought a fool than to open your mouth and remove all doubt.

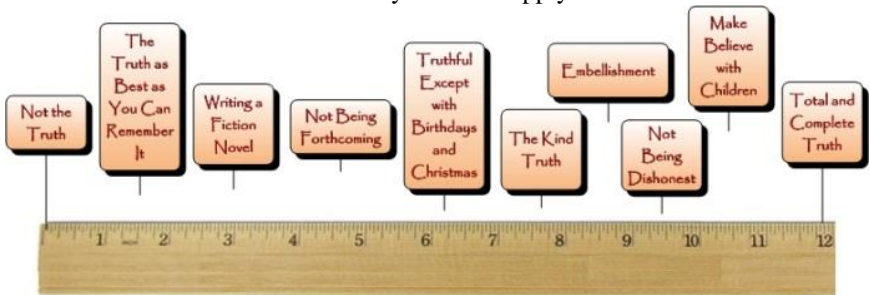
Honesty

Honesty is a pivotal part of your personality. It defines you. One can say that about many of the chapter subjects in this book, because they are interdependent. Honesty and Keeping Your Word. Honesty and Motives. Honesty and Love. Honesty and love is a very challenging duo. But that is for another chapter.

When we take a hard look at honesty, we must start with being honest with yourself. Here's where things become very difficult. How do you judge it? Since honesty is sometimes a perception and the definition (the line you cross when you are being dishonest) is different with all people, how in the world can you know that you are being totally honest with yourself? Hold these thoughts. I have the answer, but I need to lay some foundation first.

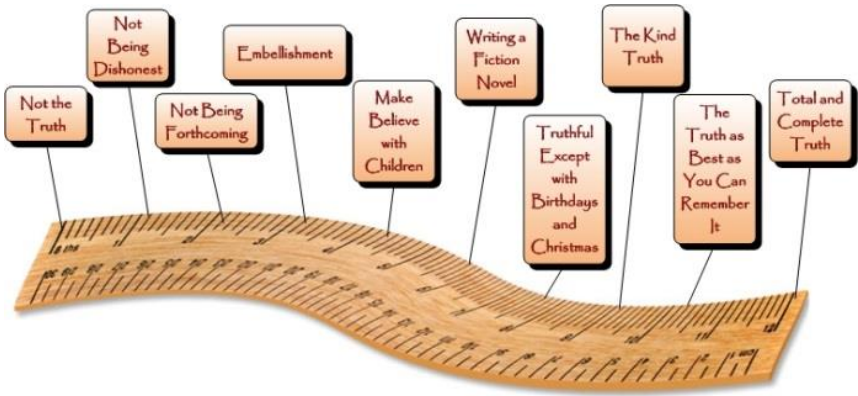
Here is an important point. It is bad to be totally honest. People have feelings that can be seriously hurt with total honesty. It might help if we look at the variations of “honesty”.

These items are all jumbled up. The two end ones are good, but what order on this scale would you place these in? The answer is in the picture after next, but make a mental note of the order you would apply for starters.



These categories of truth and deceit pretty much cover the spectrum of day-to-day honesty.

Here is the correct order and on an appropriate scale:



Not the Truth is an obvious statement of telling a lie.

Not Being Dishonest is a good description as an excuse to not tell the truth. We've all said or thought, "Well, I didn't lie." But you didn't tell the truth either.

Not Being Forthcoming is about telling the whole truth. It's when you hold back a vital piece of information. Again, we've all done it.

Embellishment is my favorite of all these statements because we all do it. Whether we realize it or not, it's kind of in our DNA. We all color the things we say to make ourselves look better or the story more interesting. The tricky part is that embellishment can be done without saying anything more than the statement, but **ADDING** gestures, facial expressions, sighs, pauses, speaking louder, speaking softer, etc.

Make Believe with Children is obviously ok, right? No. There are lines between good and bad here. Telling a made up bedtime story, keeping it clearly fantasy and not scaring the child is good. Telling them a scary story, they believe to be true is horrible. Here is a personal example; one of my daughters got a divorce. The dad is a jerk. He jokingly (I hope) said that he was homeless and living under a bridge. The middle daughter of three believed him and was so upset that she was trying to get a blanket to give to her father. The only advice I can give here is to know your audience. That assumes that you are acting like an adult, which a very big assumption. By "know your audience", I mean to think about their ages, their temperament, their mood, how tired they are, etc. Before

you begin, ask yourself this question, “What do they want to hear?” Then either read it to them or make up a story about the answer to the question.

Writing a Fiction Novel is there as a kind of joke because I write fiction novels as well as books like this one. However, I take great leeway with my writing. One of my characters is 6000 years old and is very smart. I give him fake and real identities throughout history. He was Merlin the Magician and the Roman General Pompey. I lied. Or since everyone understands that, it is a made up tale and not to be taken seriously, am I not just an entertainer? Take the craft one-step further and you write history textbooks. Or Political Science textbooks. Or Sociology textbooks. You can “tweak” the minds of many, many people and they won’t even know it. The Sociology textbook used in the class, Sociology 101, was clearly written by a liberal. **Pay attention to what you read and what the loved ones around you read.**

Truth Except with Birthdays and Christmas is a statement that I have used with my wife many times. But, there is humor there. She hates surprises, so we end up telling each other pretty much what we got them anyway. Getting gifts is better left to children in my opinion, especially considering that I have everything I want. My children have taken to giving me gift cards. Very cool.

The Kind Truth is the very best option in normal day-to-day activities. However, when you know somebody so well, they see right through your answers, no matter how you phrase them. But, it’s still the very best option. Fortunately, for me, my wife has never asked me if a dress makes her look fat. Because in my usual robot logic brain, I would be thinking, “No, the dress has nothing to do with you looking fat.” Very bad answer.

The Truth as Best as You Can Remember It is the very best position when a memory is all you have of an event. There probably is no room for The Kind Truth when you get to this point. This is usually done with all seriousness. I was in a jury selection group of about 60 people and was asked, “If you heard the testimony of a citizen and a police officer would you believe them equally with no prejudice?” Everyone nodded yes or said the word except me. The attorney asked me why and I told him, “Because a police officer is trained to observe.” A whole bunch of the other potential jurors changed their answer and I was thrown out.

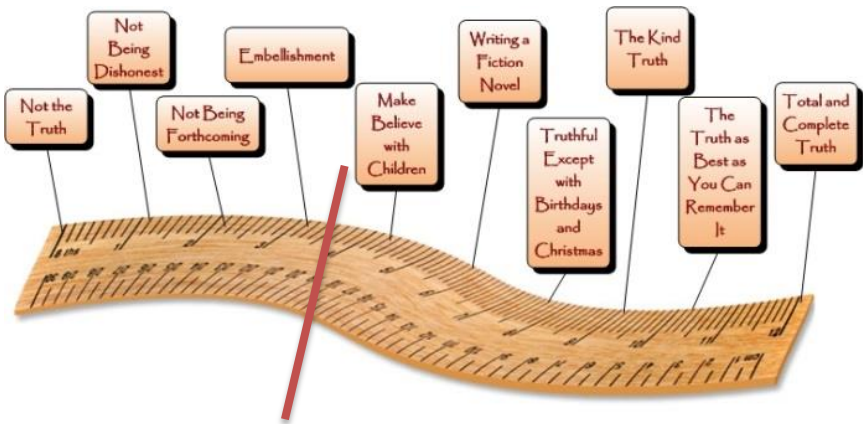
Total and Complete Truth usually is almost impossible to get at without the assistance of some kind of recording device. People’s minds are just too

subjective. That means that everyone has their own point of reference and point of view. I'm not sure we need all the technology. Society got along just fine with finding the truth from evidence, logic and witnesses. Just look at the NFL playbacks on penalties and questionable plays. That was a joke.

Here is my answer to being honest; do nothing that you need to lie about.

Here are the take-always for this chapter, there are four;

- 1) Understanding the variations on degrees of honesty is the first step toward being more honest.
- 2) Find your line and stick to it, always.
- 3) The Kind Truth is always a good place to start.
- 4) Embellishment will be the most difficult challenge in being honest.



I hope your line is right between Embellishment and Make Believe with Children.

This chapter deserves three ending phrases. They all happen to be from U.S. Presidents.

***“No man has a good enough memory to be a successful liar.”
Abraham Lincoln***

***“Honesty is the first chapter in the book of wisdom.” Thomas
Jefferson***

***“I hope I shall possess firmness and virtue enough to maintain
what I consider the most enviable of all titles, the character of an
honest man.” George Washington***

Humility

Humility or Humbleness is a trait we sorely lack in our society today. Young people are taught to be proud of their successes and strive to be that super star. They are rarely taught to be quiet and humble about the gifts they have been blessed with. I think of it as perspective of self. And here is my trick at remembering my place. Look at the picture below.



This is a picture taken from the Hubble telescope. It is the longest-range picture the telescope can capture. These are images of galaxies, not stars. Each spot of light contains billions of stars. This is a big universe and I am just a small part of it.

All my thoughts, all my work, all my life, is just a spec in the cosmos. But, it's a good spec.

Here is an easy lesson to learn. And it must be learned. It is not something natural. Always be ready to say you are sorry. Take the hard road first. It's not easy. And it's not always the career-building move either. But, when you are at fault or think you might be at fault, think about saying it first thing. You probably really are sorry for the misunderstanding, if not for your error or fault.

If you can, think about keeping the attitude going with a request for forgiveness. This is impossible for many of us.

Here is a parable from the Bible about keeping your place.

When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him, and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give your place to this person,' and then you will be going with shame take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

Makes pretty good sense to me.

Here is the take away from this chapter; having talents and gifts carries a responsibility to use them to celebrate something bigger than yourself.

“To be humble to superiors is duty, to equals courtesy, to inferiors nobleness.” Benjamin Franklin

Kindness

Being kind is one of the most important things anyone can do and is especially wonderful when someone lives it minute to minute. Many people wait for a situation to arise and take the kind road, perhaps around the coffee machine. But, when they get back to their desk, they go back into their grouchy grumpy ways. Being kind all the time is hard. It takes patience and often sacrifice.

Everyone recognizes special acts of kindness. Especially when you are behind the wheel of your car. Kind gestures stand out when you are driving because they are so rare. You have to fight to move over a lane in rush hour traffic. You put on your blinker and watch as five cars zip on by paying your blinker no mind. Then there is finally a break and the guy behind you takes his opportunity and takes off just as you are getting ready. He zips by and then there are ten more cars zipping by. The only option for you at this point is being aggressive. You flip a switch in your mind and now you are ready for battle. And guess what? That kind person that lives inside you takes a break.

We all do it to some degree from time to time. Those who have worked through these interrupts and can maintain a kind mindset are rare people indeed. Perhaps they are born with a spirit that is humble, demure and kind. I think not. If you look at these people, you can see where they got it from, their mother. It was learned from their mother by instruction and by practical demonstrations every minute of every day, probably. Having realized this, we can undue our ways and learn to have a kind attitude built in to us.

Kindness requires a substantial amount of patience and forgiveness.

Without patience, the act of kindness may seem like a chore instead of an opportunity. I actually helped a ninety four year old man who was very, very mobility challenged into a car the other day. I was glad to do it. But, it took a long time. Patience. I personally am having to work at having patience more and more the older I get. I feel my mortality and I don't want to waste the precious gift of time. There's my lame excuse.

Without forgiveness, the act of kindness may be overshadowed in your mind by a grumbling spirit. One might be thinking, "This guy's a jerk, but I'm going to help him anyway." If I was the jerk, the act of kindness may be just the thing to turn my miserable day around. Or, I may take your kindness and walk away without a thank you. That does not relieve you of your responsibility.

Yes, kindness is a responsibility. And that is the take away for this chapter, kindness is your responsibility.

“Constant kindness can accomplish much. As the sun makes ice melt, kindness causes misunderstanding, mistrust, and hostility to evaporate.” Albert Schweitzer

Education

Here's the first and easiest thing to know about education; it never stops (your whole life). It should stop when you die and if you believe in an afterlife, then you could be learning a lot very fast. Or if you don't, your education does indeed end. But that is another discussion.

Humans begin their education at cognizance. Every mother knows that is before birth. We begin to hear the same things over and over and it becomes ingrained, as we get comfortable with it. Repetition is a wonderful teaching method. Then we begin to learn what it takes to make ourselves happy. And off we go into the wonderful world of "IF, THEN". It's just like basic computer programming. If I do this, this results. We start to understand logic. And then we manipulate everything we can just to make ourselves happy.

I have been talking about a small child and I hope you could tell. Then we begin to learn by hearing and seeing facts that build upon each other to make a more complete picture of whatever it is we are hearing and seeing. If you choose to learn by attending a classroom, this scenario of reading, lectures and further study about one subject is quite effective at helping you learn.

Here are some pieces of information that may help put things in perspective. When you are out there in the working world, having a four-year degree means you are qualified for twice the number of jobs than without one. And these jobs pay about 30% more than the others. Many pay four or five times as much. And employers rarely care what the degree is in.

Here is a factoid to help as well. Employers are paying more and more attention to a degree in philosophy. What? Do they want you to philosophize for a living? No, they are respecting the degree more because philosophy is built on logic. Logic is usually Philosophy 101. Employers like this because they know that you have a foundation in analytical thinking.

My advice to you is to get a degree as soon and as fast as possible. It will change your job-hunting situation dramatically. Notice I did not say what your degree should be in.

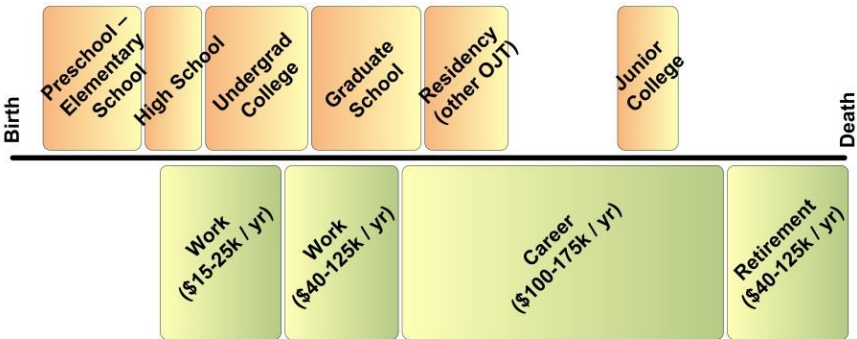
There was a commercial a while back that was anti-drugs. It showed a bunch of little kids saying what they wanted to be when they grow up, but they had the kids say things like, "When I grow up, I want to file all day long." It was a good commercial, a real dose of reality. I would guess that 5% of people are

doing the job they wanted and 95% of us took the job we could get and are not really happy about it. Very few people have a career goal of working at McDonalds. A degree puts you that much closer to being in that 5% group.

Many of the 95% group are happy at their job... because they make the best of it. Notice, I did not say they are happy *with* their job. Most of the people in the world probably fall into that category. But, you do not have to be one of them.

The most important thing about getting an education is that it teaches you how to learn. With that base, you are ready for the continual growth that you should naturally have. But, just how do you learn? I mean, what form of teaching are you personally most suited for. Do you learn best by reading? Or do you learn best by repetition? Here is a link to an article that describes the various learning styles, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Learning_styles. It is very, very good. I put this in to let you try to find your learning style to help you as you grow. If you know the best way for you to learn, you can focus on that style and progress faster than if you were using a style that is less suited to your personality.

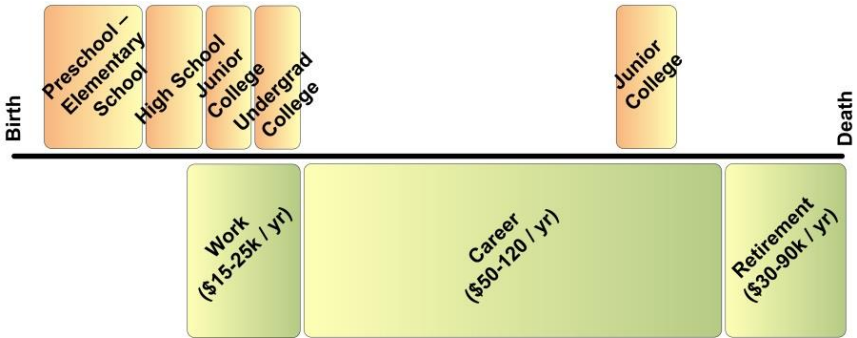
Here is an example of a person's possible education, job and salary scenario.



This example is of a person who is a highly trained professional, perhaps a doctor. Each phase of schooling gets harder and harder. The reward is obvious. This person has a lot of responsibility and that burden may be very heavy. I put the Junior College box in the later years because many people go back to school

to learn a skill that they want to use in a hobby. They may want to take a photography or oil painting class.

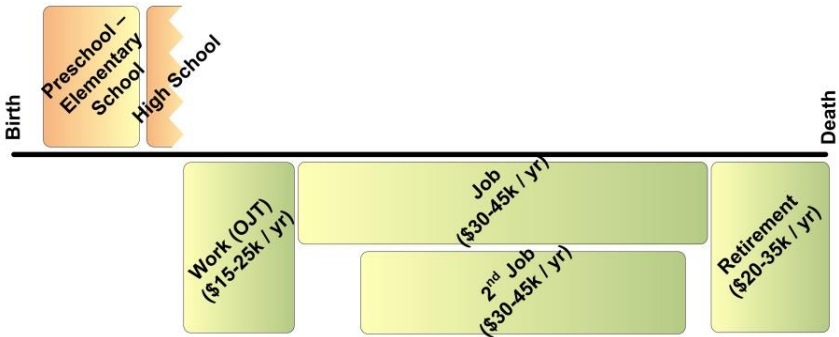
The next example is of a person that has gotten their four-year degree and stopped there. The salary is commensurate with the education. They too may want to go back to learn something new in their later years.



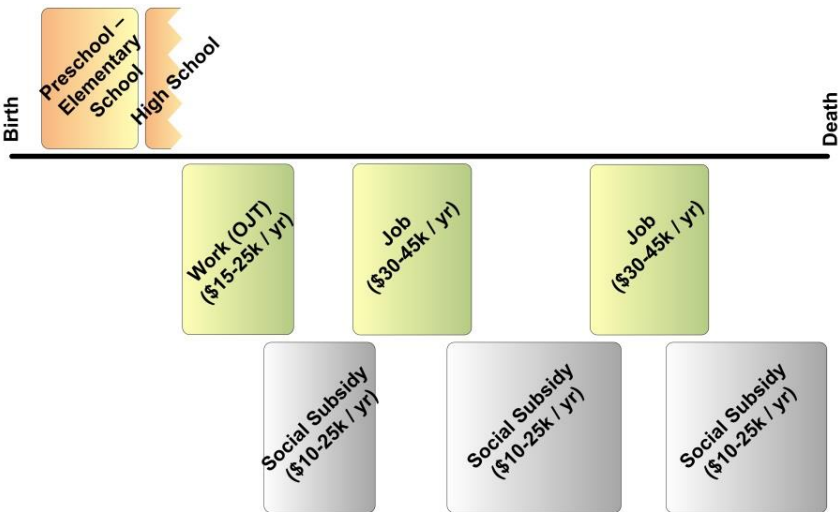
Options become very limited without a college education at all. This is a very real example for many, many people.



Options become even more dismal without a high school diploma.



Unfortunately, the last example is very real for many people. Options become so limited that there is a point where they become a prisoner to the system. They are trapped. Some make the best of it and turn it around sooner or later. For many, it becomes a game of working the system. Very sad, very sad indeed.



Most likely, I have drawn a picture that fits your life or the life you expect. But, let me make something very, very clear; it is not about making money. Money is a tool to giving you options. The more money you have, the more options you have when you make a decision. Small or big decisions, it doesn't matter. Money is not the root of all evil. The unbalanced desire for it certainly is unhealthy to your soul.

Here's the take away for this chapter; education provides possibilities on a balanced scale, more education equals more possibilities (or options) and less education limits your possibilities.

***“The roots of education are bitter, but the fruit is sweet.”
Aristotle***

“Education opens doors.” Me (and others, I am sure...)

Problem Solving

Problem Solving? What? Why in the world is this a chapter about being happy? A lot of life is about problem solving. And I am not talking about big problems. I'm talking about all problems of any size or shape. And don't think of the word problem as just things that are annoying. I am using it in the broad sense to include simple things we do every day, like going to work. Think about all the little "problems" (or decisions) required to get to work. If you are at all like me, there is ten choices to make before you get dressed. And ten more getting my stuff together to go out the door. And twenty to make once you are on the road. Break it down and it "looks" like a lot more than just "go to work".

Let's look at a small problem, like a broken shoe lace. A simple problem. Here's what you have to do to solve that problem.

1. Determine what kind of shoelace is broken so you can buy an exact replacement.
2. Figure out what store you can most likely buy the shoelace.
3. Find time to go to the store.
4. Go to the store and shop.
5. Most likely, go to a second store to shop.
6. Bring the shoelace home.
7. Change the shoelace.

Seven steps, probably completed over the span of three days. It does not look like a simple problem to me once I lay out the reality of solving the problem. And to make it even worse, the shoelace probably broke weeks ago. That makes this problem use up brain cycles for almost three weeks.

I put this example in to try to put problem solving into perspective and to make you realize you are doing it all the time.

Now let's divide the subject into parts. Problems we solve in normal day to day life, serious large complicated problem solving and fun problem solving. The shoelace example is a good one for day to day life problems. There is an old quote by Patrick Ness, "We are the choices we make." People that are wise and see our decisions we make can conclude much about us as a person. Therefore, you can do the same thing about yourself. Review some of your activities and

look at the choices that you made while conducting them. Hindsight is always a good tool to spot check on yourself. See if the result was what you hoped for when you started. And be sure to check and make sure that each decision (at least the significant ones) were honorable, honest, your integrity was upheld, and you weren't selfish (self-centered) as you made your choices.

Large complicated problems require time to solve. Patience may be the proper way to conduct yourself. A divorce would be one example. Or setting up a new marketing territory in Australia could be another. Traits of a large complex problem might be: many factors to consider, long schedule, large sums of money, and/or something that could affect lives very significantly. Here are the steps that might be involved in this;

- Gather data.
- Break down the complication into smaller parts.
- Get input from smart people.
- Put a number scale to some or all of the outcomes.
- Measure chances of success.
- Weigh the risks.
- Weigh the costs.
- Weigh the ROI (Return On Investment).
- Review the impact on people's lives.

Of course, these are just some possible things to consider and I did not list them in any particular order. Each problem is different. Certainly considering a divorce and opening a new marketing territory are quite different. Patience may be the right thing in one case, while being decisive might be the right move in the other. Notice I did not say which should be applied to my examples because each problem is different.

Here is the best advice I can give you on addressing large complicated problems; Do what is necessary to define the problem in reasonable detail by breaking it down into more manageable (and thinkable) pieces. Draw pictures. Put values on things. That means to quantify as much as possible. Numbers don't usually lie.

Fun problem solving keeps your brain sharp. It's exercise. Look at all the people who enjoy cross word puzzles. Get a hobby that challenges you to problem solve around something you enjoy.

I used to build Wrebbit 3d Puzzles. Look it up on You Tube under <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kh7t1jH0Jgo> or search for “31 Wrebbit 3d Puzzles Fly By” and include my name Ron Clark. Talk about exercising your mind. The puzzles were a big challenge that I really enjoyed.

I suggest that you take up a hobby that is more “mobile” than mine was. But here is an important factor; make sure that it produces something that you can hold or look at and enjoy the satisfaction of a job completed and a problem solved.

Here is the take away for this chapter; Be the best Problem Solver you can, it is a reflection of you. And, enjoy solving the fun problems all your life.

“If I had an hour to solve a problem I'd spend 55 minutes thinking about the problem and 5 minutes thinking about solutions.” Albert Einstein

Work

I am going to confine this definition of work to mean what we do to earn a living. It might be a career, temporary employment, long term employment that was supposed to be temporary, a personal service enterprise or any one of many activities we simply call “work”.

I’ve already touched on work in several chapters, so I am going to attempt to not repeat myself. But, I must recap one very important item. The Puritan Ethic as I sum it up says a lot, “Earn your keep.” That simple phrase can be best kept in its place by thinking about the cash involved in your employment. If I call a meeting with five senior executives asked to attend, how much cash is sitting there? Let’s round off their salaries to \$125k / year. And let’s use 1500 FTE (Full Time Employee/Equivalent) hours / year.

$\$125,000 / 1500 = \$83 / \text{hour}$. $\$83 \times 6 = \$500 / \text{hour}$. $\$500 / 60 = \$8.33 / \text{minute}$.

So, in this meeting, we are burning through a little over \$8 every minute. Now let’s suppose one of these people is ten minutes late and we must wait to start. That is about \$80 pretty much wasted. I don’t know about you, but I would like to have \$80 magically appear in my pocket. That’s a tank of gas. And that makes it a fair size amount of cash. How many lunches can you buy for that \$80. It kind of gives more weight to the old phrase, “time is money”.

Now let’s think of it in terms of your personal productivity. I will use \$30 / hour as your salary. That’s \$5 every 10 minutes. Now think about the times you are late or leave early and don’t make up the time. What about work time used for personal things. Your employer is probably agreeable with short important personal items you must address during work hours like calling a doctor to make an appointment. But, they are probably not ok with you searching the internet for a good plumber for an hour.

Let’s complicate things by pretending that when you are plumber searching you actually have nothing to do. I have no answer for this situation except to say that one should be grateful for any job at all and not abuse that trust that your employer has put in you. But, I do have some advice, talk to your boss. Talk about your responsibilities during slack time. Let them know that you want to give them full value for your time. Let them know that you want to be a

productive member of their staff. Things will work out if you just talk. I guarantee you one thing, they know what's going on.

What you do at work should be built on things we have already or will talk about, integrity, honesty, keeping your word, and many more.

Here are the take aways for this chapter (there are two); realize the cash that is being spent every minute of every working hour at your place of employment. This will help you keep things in perspective. And, give full value for your wages.

“Employment is a blessing, not a curse. Treat it with the respect it is due.” Me

Play

Just so we are clear on the definition of “play”, let me give you an example. I often “work” around the house, actually earning money and conducting business associated with it. My wife will ask me what I am doing and I will respond with “Work”. But, I will also respond with, “Just playing”. Play for me is hobbies or simply playing with little children.

Your play may involve water skiing, mountain climbing or any number of things you like to do for fun. Now the question becomes, “What kind of play are you are involved in?” Is it beneficial? Is it legal? Is it in your budget? Is it spreading goodness?

What? Spreading goodness? What does that mean? It means just what it says. And it boils down to one simple thought. Am I leaving the places I have been better off than when I came? I hope I do that everywhere I go and with everyone I encounter. I want to leave everyone with a smile and a happier disposition than when we met. If I have to get to it to make someone feel better, I tell my favorite joke. I told it back in the humor chapter.

When I walk around, I pick up litter. It does not take much to leave “improvement” as you pass by.

When talking about play, remember the lesson on moderation. If you are into zip lining and enjoy it once in a while, good. If you are the instructor and zip line all the time, it becomes work.

Play is an essential part of your personality. The old adage about all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy really is true. Take time for fun, but make it worth doing. I hope you don’t call watching all TV fun. It may relax you, but fun should involve stimulation and participation.

If you haven’t noticed, these chapters are getting shorter. That is because the subjects have been previously touched on or more than likely, the lessons learned already simply apply to the current chapter and need not be repeated. But, hold on, the big three, faith, love and hope, are about to follow and they will not be short chapters.

Here is the take away for this chapter, have fun.

“Work consists of whatever a body is obliged to do. Play consists of whatever a body is not obliged to do.” Mark Twain

“Have regular hours for work and play; make each day both useful and pleasant, and prove that you understand the worth of time by employing it well. Then youth will bring few regrets, and life will become a beautiful success.” Louisa May Alcott, Little Women

Hobbies

Hobbies are sometimes called projects without a schedule.

Hobbies are a reflection of your personality. They can reflect your spirit of adventure, your quiet personal time, your time to spend time with your partner alone. Hobbies are simply your chosen form of fun enjoyed on a regular basis.

All of those facts about hobbies are true, but missing all kinds of side restriction that we have talked about earlier like moderation, habits, diligence, play and problem solving.

The last discussion chapter of this book is on priorities. And the first worksheet exercise is to take the list of almost all the subjects in this book and reorder them in your personal priority. Then you will look at the time spent on some of them and reorder them again as you think they should be. It will be interesting to see the changes in the list as you start using the worksheet.

The only things worth saying about your hobbies has already been said in previous chapters. Hobbies should be like play; Is it beneficial? Is it legal? Is it within your budget? Is it spreading goodness?

Here is the take away for this chapter; have a hobby or two or three within moderation

***Tina loves to square dance
And Toby loves to visit France***

***Bobby loves to play soccer
While Sid works at being a rocker***

***Fritz loves to ride a bike
And Mona loves to bowl a strike***

***Everyone to his or her own
Whether together or all alone***

***As for me, I love to end rhymes
With a line that doesn't***

Faith

Faith is the belief in something that you cannot prove. It is built into each and every society and person living in that society. Faith is the natural part of us that recognizes that we are smaller than whatever created us. And that anything that created me and everything deserves to be respected at a minimum.

Having said all that, one must realize that people have degrees of faith. Some people have deep faith in what they believe and will die for it. Others, unfortunately, will kill for theirs. And faith isn't just about a religion, it is about people as well. I have an ultimate faith in our American Presidents and our other leaders. It varies with each individual, but I continue to have faith that our country is a very good country.

My personal journey of faith starts where we all start as children. It began with faith in my mom and dad to take care of me. Then as I was introduced to our family's religion, I had faith in God as well. When I really could think for myself, I rejected that faith for self. Then, a more mature self, searched the great literatures of faiths and settled on one. This time, my choices were logically arrived at and have stood the test of time. However, let me be very clear on this, my degree of faith has varied as love-of-self got in the way.

Where there is no faith, love cannot flourish
Where there is no love, there can be no hope
And without hope, life is turned away

So hold strong to your faith, so life can bloom
So love can blossom and hope can rest in everyone
That life is worth living and love is there for the giving

Organized faiths of our societies dominate the percentages of the world's population. These faiths are usually and commonly referred to as religions. The typical road to being an active, believing member of these religions almost always is copied from the mother. If Mom is a Baptist, the family is Baptist. If Mom is a Catholic, the family is Catholic. Eastern Religions on the other hand often are led by the Father. (Or so he thinks...).

Changing faiths is not a common occurrence. It is rare when a Baptist decides to become a Catholic. A distinct change in Religions can be the result of marrying into a family. Personally, I am not a big fan of religious labels. I am a big fan of seeing someone be happy with their faith and watching them practice the wonderful principals that are at the heart of their beliefs.

Make no mistake, everyone has faith. Yes, even people who don't believe in a creator or higher power. If you think about it, it actually takes more faith to *not* believe in God than to believe. Here is a list of things people have faith in;

1. God
2. Family
3. Government
4. Your Spiritual Leader
5. Mankind
6. Friends
7. Coworkers
8. Money
9. Stocks, CDs, Savings, and other saving tools
10. Self
11. Real Estate Values
12. Retirement Pension
13. Social Security

This is a pretty broad list of things one might have faith in. Of course, age is a big factor in the list. Review the list one more time and look for all the things that will matter after you have “shuffled off this mortal coil” (die).

There is only one that will carry you beyond this life and that is God. Considering the length of eternity vs our lifetime, I choose to put my most significant faith in God.

But, that is my choice and you have yours. Faith is simply a necessary trait to have to really experience Love and Hope. So the take away from this chapter is to have faith.

“Take the first step in faith. You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step.” Martin Luther King, Jr.

Love

Traditionally, love can be divided into different types of love. There is Eros love, Philo love and Agape love. Agape love is the common definition of love being unconditional love. Eros is erotic or physical love and Philo love is the type of love between two good friends.

We need not bother speaking about Eros love anymore. It is quite clear and well known to all of us. It is passing and shallow. It may bring short term happiness, but not the happiness that we are searching for.

Philo love is a good kind of caring love. It is part and parcel with Agape love in terms of different kinds of relationships. Again, we need not spend any more time on it as well since the real love that gives the kind of happiness we are addressing is Agape love.

Agape love is selfless and unconditional. The easiest example I can think of is that of a mother and child. Selfless is a word we have used previously. It goes with motives, honesty and kindness. They are outcomes of a life filled with Agape love.

Love and faith have a lot in common. Both require taking a step into the unknown, at least a baby step. Giving your love to someone makes you vulnerable. It is quite scary for many who have been hurt by taking that step.

About 390 verses in the Bible out of a total of about 31,000 specifically mention the word Love. The web says that about half of the songs written are about Love. It should be obvious that our culture and all past cultures put a lot of time and energy into the subject of love in literature. Why is so much effort put into something that is pretty much intangible?

“Keep love in your heart. A life without it is like a sunless garden when the flowers are dead.” Oscar Wilde

“Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage.” Lao Tzu

“Love is composed of a single soul inhabiting two bodies.” Aristotle

“Where there is love there is life.” Mahatma Gandhi

“Love is a game that two can play and both win.” Eva Gabor

“Faith makes all things possible... love makes all things easy.” Dwight L. Moody

“Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.” Alfred Lord Tennyson

“A loving heart is the truest wisdom.” Charles Dickens

Out of all these quotes, I personally like the one by Eva Gabor. Ha ha.

To really love someone, you must first love yourself. Yes, you must be self-centered to begin with. Think about it, if you really don't like yourself, then how can you share yourself with anyone with dignity, honesty and selflessness. It is not so much as being self-centered as it is having simple respect for yourself.

The Beatles wrote a song, “All You Need is Love”. They got it wrong. Love is not all you need. Faith allows love and love brings hope. Love is great, but not all you need.

Here is the take away for this chapter, Have faith and love with all your heart (life, family, your God...). And while you are at it, take a chance, fall in love (possible mates, mate).

“We got a groovy kind of love.” Toni Wine and Carole Bayer Sager

Hope

Hope is something we all probably have, but to drastically varying degrees. A Muslim has hope in eternal life after death through their works if they are great enough to be pleasing to Allah. A Hindu has hope in eternal life after death through reincarnation until they reach Nervana. A Christian has hope in eternal life after death with Jesus Christ (God the Son), God the Father and God the Holy Spirit in heaven.

It is obvious that each individual person has degrees of Hope in these matters. Some are quite casual about it, while others are fervent to the point of extremism. Realize this about yourself and make a judgment as to where your reality is and where you would like it to be. If there is a difference, then you now have the start of a goal in this important area.

A person's degree of hope has the same premise as faith. It is probably true that the same things you have faith in are the same things that give you hope. (I really hope it is not winning the lottery).

There is another word akin to hope and that is optimism. Optimism is the opposite of pessimism. One way to look at these opposites is the old question about whether you consider a half a glass of water to be half full or half empty. On the lighter side is a personal note; the last time someone made a comment about me being the optimist and referred to the half full glass, I said, "The first thing I think of when I look at the glass is, "Is it real?""

Optimistic people are generally happier than pessimistic people. Their disposition seems to be "sunnier". They are more easy going in general. They take negative events with greater ease than pessimistic people. But, just to be fair, pessimistic people often look for the negative side of things and are often not disappointed. Well, that's something, anyway.

Chances are, since you are reading this book, that you are at least a little bit (or a lot) more on the side of the optimistic scale rather than the pessimistic side.

This next statement is probably not necessary, but here it is anyway. If you are a pessimist, you need to rethink that side of your personality. Living life with a negative attitude will do nothing for you, except probably eat away at your insides. So, as easy as this is to say, it is incredibly hard to do; be positive. Cast away your negativism and have hope that your lot in life is a good one. I know you cannot flip a switch and make that happen. You must work at it. Anything

in your personality that mitigates your best at Faith, Love or Hope needs to be addressed as a priority. You need those foundations or everything else, justice, selflessness, etc. will be just “going through the motions” and will not bring true lasting happiness.

Here is your take away for this incredibly important chapter; Keep your feelings of hopefulness nurtured and habitual. Live an optimistic life. It pays dividends exponentially on the investment you make.

“We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.” Martin Luther King, Jr.

Partner

I used the word Partner as the title for this chapter to not offend anyone. You may replace it in your mind with spouse, wife, husband, significant other, girlfriend, boyfriend, mate, soul-mate or whatever makes you feel right. If you do not have one, then read this chapter quickly, but read it.

This chapter is about how you treat this person, particularly considering all the previous chapters. Is this the one true *love* relationship? Are you *kind* to this person? Do you love them *selflessly*?

This person should be the number one gauge on how you are doing with the subjects we have been talking about. That statement is so important, let me say it again in a different way, “Your partner is *the* person you should use to measure your progress in the subjects in this book first.” Then look to others, especially family members. Happiness really does start at home.

Your partner is the person who is supposed to know you the best. They should be “partnering” with you in your quest for true and lasting happiness. I highly recommend the both of you reading this book together and working with the worksheet together as well.

However, the fact that they are your closest companion means that they are a special challenge. Often, people are so comfortable with their relationship that we act our worst. We act exactly the opposite of how we should be treating this person.

Let’s look at some of the chapter subjects with the person closest to us as the focus. After the title of the chapter subject is one or two simple questions and then a closing suggestion.

- Moods, Especially Funks
 - Do you inflict these bad feelings onto your special person?
 - Or do you enlist and receive comfort in those difficult times?
 - Share. Ask for support, either directly or something more subtle.
- Habits
 - Do you have good habits regarding your special person, like saying “I love you.” When you end a phone call or when you leave them?
 - Do you have or share bad habits with your special person?
 - Develop good habits. They will see you through rocky times.

- Your Word
 - When you commit to something regarding your special person, are you really committed or do you speak so casually that nothing you say can be counted upon?
 - Or does giving your word have the same integrity, commitment and diligence behind it that you give to everyone?
 - Giving your word to your special person should be one of the most important commitments you make, because they are the most important person in your life.
- Selflessness
 - Does the happiness and wellbeing of your special person mean more (or at least equally) to you than your own happiness and wellbeing?
 - It should.
- Motives
 - Regarding your special person, are your motives for doing nice things just to serve your ends or are they to uplift, support, love, etc.?
 - They should start with Selflessness.
- Honesty
 - Is the challenge of being honest with your special someone too much?
 - If it is, then you need to rethink a lot of things, but start by re-reading the chapter on Honesty.
- Kindness
 - Are you as kind to your special someone as you should be?
 - They should be the one you are the most kind to every minute of every day.
- Hobbies
 - Do you share a hobby with your special someone?
 - If not, give it a try, but be careful to select the hobby together.
- Faith
 - Do you share the same faith (religion) as your special someone?
 - Do you have about the same degree of faith?

- The nuances of the faith do not matter, but the basic foundation and the basic degree of your faith should be about the same. If not, consider why not.
- Do you share the same faith in people, organizations and/or institutions?
- Again, the nuances do not matter, but the things you put your faith in and the degree of that faith should be about the same. If not, consider why not.
- Hope
 - Do you share the same hopes with your special someone?
 - Do you have about the same degree of optimism as your special someone does?
 - If there is a big difference? If so, consider why?
- Love
 - Do you love (not lust) each other in the same way and to the same degree?
 - If not, consider why?

This exercise should hopefully be a pleasant one. If it wasn't, then there is work for you to do in this relationship. I personally believe that there is a soul mate out there for everyone. If you are lucky enough to have found that magic, fight to keep it.

Here is the take away for this chapter and it is not an easy one; the special someone you have should be at the forefront of your thoughts as you work your way through each day.

“Love is a fire. But whether it is going to warm your hearth or burn down your house, you can never tell.” Joan Crawford

Parents

If you are lucky enough to have or had parents at all, good for you. Many people do not enjoy that relationship. Parents are a blessing as you are to them. If you do not have parents, the chances are good that you have someone in your life that fills in the gap. Please consider them as you read.

This is going to be a very short chapter. How you treat your parents is obvious to those of us who have lived a substantial percentage of our life. Of course, the things we have mentioned in previous chapters applies. However, there is one important item that has not been mentioned, respect.

When you are young and your parents are in charge, they deserve respect. It doesn't matter how they act, the simple fact that they pay your way and let you be a child deserves some degree of respect.

As you mature physically, your mature personality often lags behind. I know many young adults who act like they are twelve. That disparity often will cause young adults to make serious judgment errors regarding how they see their parents. All parents who have had children who are over twenty or so know what I am about to say to be very true.

In the eyes of a teenager, parents are not as smart as we once thought them to be. And then when that young person reaches around twenty or twenty two-ish, all of a sudden your parents get a whole lot smarter. Guess what, they haven't changed at all.

Your age right now is playing a big part in how you are understanding and perceiving this book. Everyone has different perspectives because everyone was raised differently and therefore has different experiences. But, no matter how different we are in age, gender, affluence, places we live, etc., your parents deserve respect. And that is the simple take away for this chapter, parents deserve respect.

“A child who is allowed to be disrespectful to his parents will not have true respect for anyone.” Billy Graham

Grandparents

Grandparents deserve extra special respect. They have lived long enough to earn it. And they all have a special place in their hearts for their grandchildren.

But there are some pitfalls to being a grandparent to be sure. One is contention with the parents. If there is serious disagreement on how to raise the little ones, it can lead to a rift. And rifts can easily become crevasses and they grow until the distance seems impossible to ever overcome. Of course, this is only one thing that can destroy relationships with children and their children.

Divorces are one major example of things that lead to grandparents being separated from their grandchildren. It is probably the cruelest thing the young parent can do. Certainly there are times when this is warranted. But, when it is done in spite or unforgiveness, it is the meanest thing that can be done to that grandparent.

In legal cases of child abuse or neglect there is much sadness as a rule. Children may be separated from their parent(s) and suffer greatly because of it. They likely live in a world of disappointment. However, there often is a hero to these stories that makes them end as happily as they can in some cases. Any judge who presides over these cases knows the answer and it is Grandma. The Grandmother ends up with full custody of the children and raises a second set of children.

Many times these wonderful people share some of their life with grandchildren and it is the most cherished memory a young person will ever have.

If you are having a challenging relationship with a Grandparent or your parents in their role as Grandparent, you should review some of the previous chapters about selflessness and kindness with them in mind. And perhaps they should be a priority on your worksheet.

The take away for this chapter comes in three parts; 1) Grandparents, in general, deserve extra special respect, 2) You should take advantage of their wisdom and 3) Learn of their lives as an extension of your own.

“If you're lucky enough to still have grandparents, visit them, cherish them and celebrate them while you can.” Regina Brett

“The reason grandparents and grandchildren get along so well is that they have a common enemy.” Sam Levenson

Children

Children are the future.

Dan Fogelberg, a musician, wrote a song called Forefathers. The main verse line is “we all become forefathers by and by.” Time is a relentless thing. Einstein understood its grind and found a way to bend it. It stops for no one and the longer you live, the more you realize that we live in a finite life. But every life begins as a child. And a cycle of life begins again.

I optimistically believe that it is the desire of each generation to make things better for the next one. And the key to improving the future of mankind in general is the children. Ignore them or let them be destroyed by war or famine and it takes generations to recover.

Children should be the easiest people to love. Sure they are selfish, but they love automatically and with all their hearts back at you. The subjects in some of the previous chapters are quite unknown to a small child and must be learned. These include Selflessness, Justice, Diligence and Moderation. These things are best learned by example. And obviously, the number one example is the parents. That’s a big responsibility. And to make it even harder than it is, many parents are ill prepared to be the adult they are now being forced to be (or should be).

Here’s the take away for this chapter; Children are our number one natural resource. And that is a big responsibility.

"Children are the living messages we send to a time we will not see." John W. Whitehead

Friends

Friends are one of the most important things in a person's life. There are several types of friends and people use the word casually meaning different things to different people. For the purposes of this discussion, the type of friend I am talking about are your very close ones, not acquaintances and not your Facebook friends.

Friends are a valuable commodity and should not be taken lightly. They should be selected carefully and the relationship carefully managed as well. They should not be something that is circumstance driven, which is the case most of the time. People make close friends with next door neighbors simply because they live next door and there is easy access. If there were twenty random people put in a room and you had a chance to visit with each of them, would you honestly select your next door neighbor as a close friend? If so, you are very lucky.

Close friends often participate in your life to such an extent, they have influence on your family, especially children. Undoubtedly, they have different standards about many things than you. Probably not many, or you would not be friends at all. But, wouldn't it be nice if you could check references just as you would for a nanny or even babysitter.

One of the major pitfalls of these circumstantial close friends is that you really won't know their real nature until some incident forces them to show it. It could be a very good revelation or a very bad one. Many close friendships end after a few months of bliss because of some misunderstanding. Then you are left with an up close and personal tension filled relationship that you cannot easily separate from. Good fences really do make good neighbors. I have personally turned down several requests from neighbors to put in a gate between our properties.

Here is the take away for this chapter; Choose your friends wisely. Slowly and carefully, cultivate friendships from acquaintances to friends and then into close friends.

There are lots of choices for chapter end quotes on this subject, but I chose one of my favorite set of lyrics by Paul Simon.

Old Friends / Bookends

*Old friends, old friends
Sat on their park bench like bookends
A newspaper blown through the grass
Falls on the round toes
Of the high shoes of the old friends
Old friends, winter companions, the old men
Lost in their overcoats, waiting for the sunset
The sounds of the city sifting through trees
Settle like dust on the shoulders of the old friends
Can you imagine us years from today?
Sharing a park bench quietly
How terribly strange to be seventy
Old friends, memory brushes the same years
Silently sharing the same fears
Time it was and what a time it was, it was
A time of innocence, a time of confidences
Long ago, it must be, I have a photograph
Preserve your memories, they're all that's left you*

Listening vs. Hearing

How's your hearing? Excellent you say. Good. Now that we have that out of the way, you have no excuse for not listening. Listening implies understanding and comprehension. Of course, there are degrees of that understanding and comprehending. And there are levels of attention that should be given to listening. That is not a very popular statement. I've had people call me on it and say, "We should be listening to a person with all our attention we have to give. They deserve it." And I agree with it. But it is not very real.

How do you read? Do you read silently at the same speed you read out loud? Or do you fly along about twice as fast in your head? This is how most people read the newspaper; They scan the large headlines and the second size down at one glance, then they either focus on something on that page and read the article or maybe the subtitles that are usually in an article. They may not finish the article and move on. Or they scan several pages selecting article to return to and then follow through with their plan, if they have the time. The point is that every time we read, we are trying to make it short, trying not to waste too much time. And trying to find something interesting to each of us. We read different things at different speed with different depths of attention. And that's the way it is.

And that is how we listen as well. We give more attention to some things than we do to others. So what more is there to say about it? Just one thing. Pay attention to giving the right level of attention to what you are listening to. Think about it as you are listening. If your special someone is talking, you should probably be listening closely. Try to not get into that cliché' habit of saying, "uh huh" to give the illusion that you are paying attention.

Here's the take away for this chapter; listen with respect to the person who is talking.

“One of the most sincere forms of respect is actually listening to what another has to say.” Bryant H. McGill

Perspective

Everyone is unique. We all come from different backgrounds with different experiences that shape us. It's no wonder that clear communication is a challenge. I look at a picture and see something different than you because of our perspective. Perspective is our point of view from which we see each different circumstance or imagine a circumstance.

It is essential to realize that every person has a different perspective on each and every communication. For me, it comes down to something I said earlier, know your audience. There are many cliché's about this. Here is my favorite; Before you criticize a man, walk a mile in his shoes.

It's all about empathy to understand someone else's perspective. Learning to feel what the other person is feeling as well as thinking. Body language can go a long way to guiding your empathetic self. That is only when there is not a two way conversation going on. It is a good lesson to read a good book on body language and trying to tell if someone is being truthful. It will serve you well in all facets of your life.

There is a famous story about blind men feeling an elephant and then describing it to each other. One man touches only the tusk and says the elephant is like a solid pipe, one touches the trunk and says the elephant is like a rope, and another touches the elephant's side and says it is like a wall. All are correct from their point of view.

Understanding someone's perspective and having empathy for that person is a wonderful thing. Sharing and understanding where they are coming from makes you wiser. It's as simple as that. Every time you share a little bit of another person's soul by being empathetic and looking at things from their perspective, you gain wisdom.

Here is the take away for this chapter; When interacting with others, pay attention to things beyond their words and try to "feel" things from their point of view.

“If there is any one secret of success, it lies in the ability to get the other person's point of view and see things from that person's angle as well as from your own.” Henry Ford

Patience

Many people choose to ignore being patient because they think of it only as a time waster, not waiting. It certainly does nothing to sit and fret over being kept waiting in a doctor's office. Perhaps action is warranted, but it may require simply being a patient patient (pun intended).

Having patience provides many positive instant outcomes. Here are some possible ones:

- Quiet time for meditation or prayer
- Time to quietly think
- Time to read
- Time to visit with someone
- Time to listen to some music

But that is the easy side of describing patience. Here are the two hard sides that need discussion, 1) Having patience with God and 2) Having patience with others.

When people pray they often pray for things they desire and most of the time it is asking for something good for someone else. But often enough, it is for a solution to a problem about health, loved ones, money or things. And it might be something big, critical and has a time constraint on it, "Please let me get that better job. Its open until Friday." Or "Should I ask Jane to marry me before I go away to my new post this Saturday?"

Logically, God (or god or higher power or whatever you choose), has three choices to answer prayers, yes, no or wait. Wait!!!??? That can't be the answer to my prayer!! People often don't realize that is a choice and they get all frustrated and disappointed without a black and white, yes or no. If this is you, go back and reread my chapter on Faith.

There is a wonderful song by Stephen Curtis Chapman about God answering prayers. It is called Waiting for Lightning. The chorus goes;

But you're waiting for lightning
A sign that it's time for a change
And you're listening for thunder

While He quietly whispers your name

Having patience with people is a whole other story. You see, because they are usually physically accessible. And typically, God is not. In our minds, we often think of God as a distant father-creator spirit. That makes us tend to ignore Him or Her at our convenience. On the other hand, people are right there in our lives and many will not be ignored. This conception about God is totally wrong in my opinion. I never lose sight of the power behind the word.

So, what do we do about being patient with people? *We learn* to be patient. It's easier for some than others. Women seem to have it better than men. I think that is because of their role in raising children. Every mother knows that being patient with children is hard, but it starts with a bang when the first baby arrives. Mothers have no choice but to live to the schedule of the infant for a few days at least. And they get a crash course in patience. However, all the frustration, impatience and trouble the baby causes you are usually overwhelmed by the love that is there.

I have an odd way of problem solving. When a mechanical problem is put in front of me, I do not like to talk about it with anyone working with me or observing me for just a few seconds. I need to ponder the problem in quiet for just 20 or 30 seconds. To someone who is a talker problem solver, 20 or 30 seconds is a very long time to be still. I have encountered very few people who, even when I tell them my process, will be quiet for that short time and let me think. Then I am ready to discuss the solution and hear what they have to say. I usually end up modifying my solution with input from them. It's great. So, I actually request people to be patient with me.

Here is the most important question in this chapter; How patient are you with your significant someone and your closest friends? They should be the ones we are most patient with and often we treat them exactly the opposite. We are short tempered or even rude to them most of all. How horrible for us and how horrible for them. Patience is a big part of kindness.

And that is the take away for this chapter; Patience is very big and important part of kindness.

Lord, hurry up and give me patience. Ha ha.

Driving & Common Courtesy

The way you drive and the degree to which you have common courtesy are excellent indicators of how well you are doing with the personality traits you wish to improve upon. Sounds a little odd at first glance. Common courtesy is clearly a good measure. But driving? Why driving?

It's easy and here is why. We have three basic modes of operation these days, things we do when we are alone, driving and directly interacting with people. When we are alone, we do things we would never do when interacting with people. Are they things we would be ashamed to tell a close friend? If so, reread the chapter on motives. Directly interacting with people allows us to show common courtesy. If you find yourself having trouble with common courtesy for some reason, being in a hurry or some other excuse, reread the chapter on things out of your control, kindness and work.

Driving is interesting because you are protected by a suit of armor from most direct interaction with anyone except your passengers. But this is not about the passengers. So while we are driving we are in between being alone and directly interacting with people. Because of this unique situation we are free to be more “ourselves.” It provides a wonderful opportunity for self-assessment in many areas;

- Moods – How often does being in a bad mood effect your driving?
- Habits – Do you have poor habits about using your signals or cutting into a lane with very little room?
- Selflessness – Do you demonstrate this by being fair when lanes merge?
- Kindness – Does your overall aggressiveness level reflect real aggression or does in reflect a calm spirit?
- Perspective – Are you paying attention to the other driver to be in tune with how they drive?
- Patience – Are you patient with the other drivers?

The take away for this chapter is the answers to the questions above.

“Have you ever noticed that anybody driving slower than you is an idiot, and anyone going faster than you is a maniac?” George Carlin

Disasters, Emergencies, Deaths, Inheritances, etc.

Disasters, emergencies, deaths, inheritances and the like often brings out the true makeup of people. They are tested and found wanting or rise up to the occasion and shine. These things eventually come to all of us and how we handle ourselves reveals much. I dare say that you will probably surprise yourself. Hopefully, it is a pleasant surprise and not one of disappointment and shame. The latter outcome can haunt an individual for years.

Deaths can be particularly telling. When someone dies, sometimes relatives turn up that have not been heard from in years. How nice. I watch and see who takes charge. If it isn't the obvious choice and there usually is one, then take a good look at who does.

If the deceased has left property and there are multiple inheritors, it could be a rocky road to resolving all the finances. Some people are greedy and may have been waiting for this opportunity.

There is no simple catch phrase to sum up the love and family that are brought together by a death. And there certainly isn't one for the opposite where there are squabbles and arguments and then attorneys. Many family members will probably end up not speaking to each other for a long time. The reality is usually a mix of loving kind people just wanting to do what the deceased would want and the greedy.

I hope you are not the greedy one. If you find yourself in that position take a good assessment of your motives before you join in with the business at hand. Be the better man or woman.

And I guess there is important side message that should be addressed as well. Write a will, a clear one that prevents any disputes, as much as possible.

Here is the take away for this awful chapter; When extraordinary times fall, be the extraordinary person you truly are.

“Hard times don't create heroes. It is during the hard times when the 'hero' within us is revealed.” Bob Riley

Priorities

Prioritizing is putting the right things first in importance and the least important things last. It's as simple as that. The hard part is selecting the priorities. And in a constantly changing world, your priorities must shift as well. I cannot give you the correct priorities in your life, but the previous chapters should give you some clues.

Taking the priorities into serious consideration with every decision you make is critically important. Never ignore them or you will find yourself floundering rather than sailing through life.

Nobody's life is ever all balanced. It's a conscious decision to choose your priorities every day. Elisabeth Hasselbeck

The End

Ronald Eugene Clark
clarkronald@yahoo.com
512 917 9402