

Learning to Live Well - II

Attitude - The next three important concepts

Learning to live well is an important process for our well being. Some of the most striking concerns that come to mind are: Where did I come from? Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going? While I do not pretend to have the comprehensive answers to these and other life questions, I do offer some thoughtful information that may help address these and other questions. I wish to present and investigate three additional important words that I believe are an essential concepts to continue; Persona, Persistence, Perseverance.

Persona:

Learning to live well obviously begins with thoughts about you – persona. Other synonyms will help you understand what I am talking about concerning you as a person: Character, role, personality, and qualities. Your character, qualities, and personality are an intrinsic part of how well you will live and what role in life you will play. Your persona is the part of you that is unique and may be quite different from another person, even within your family.

Many people think that living well is directly related to one's ancestry, upbringing, education, opportunities or even luck. While it is true that these aspects of one's life may lend asset and influence to our maturity, I do not believe that they are in any way primary in the cause of our living well. I say this because there are so many people in history who did very well in life but who came from poor ancestry, careless upbringing with little formal education. These people became extremely successful in life even without apparent beneficial opportunities or good luck.

The word "character" is derived from the Greek word charaktêr, which was originally used of a mark impressed upon a coin. Later and more generally, it came to mean a point by which one thing was told apart from others (Timpe 2007). Moral character or character is an evaluation of a particular individual's moral qualities. The concept of character can imply a variety of attributes including the existence or lack of virtues such as integrity, courage, fortitude, honesty, and loyalty, or of good behaviors or habits. Moral character primarily refers to the assemblage of qualities that distinguish one individual from another - although on a cultural level, the set of moral behaviors to which a social group adheres can be said to unite and define it culturally as distinct from others. Psychologist Lawrence Pervin defines moral character as "a disposition to behave expressing itself in consistent patterns of functioning across a range of situations" (Pervin 1994, p. 108)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moral_character

When anyone asks the question, "where did I come from", there is a universal concept that effects every person; we all come from the same common ancestry. Religions have stories that tell us how we came to be and almost everyone knows the stories of Adam and Eve in the Bible (Genesis chap 1 & 2) and the Koran. (<http://www.therevival.co.uk/adam-eve-quran>) To add to this concept of common ancestry we are beginning to realize how much we all are, in fact, from a universal origin. The discovery of DNA science has demonstrated that our genes are alike as humans and very close to all living creatures. (<http://earthsky.org/?p=433>) Many however may not realize that race is not factual but invented to separate the human race in a hierarchy of classes for social and economic gain. I personally visited the presentation of facts about race when it was at Liberty Science Center in Jersey

City, New Jersey. Fortunately there is a wonderful website to help everyone to understand these facts today. (<http://www.understandinggrace.org/home.html>)

Realizing that we are all from a common DNA and, as human beings, are a significant part of the created universe on this earth in particular, we should be able to respect and show concern for one another around the globe to properly assume our leadership in caring. As we grow in understanding the beauty and complexity of life it should make us grateful to be a part of all the magnificence around us. True gratitude will promote appropriate care and concern. Perhaps another acronym will help expand on what it means to care.

CARE – Constantly Appreciate and Respect Everyone

Our care must be constant and consistent. Whenever there is a gap in care we need to call that neglect. Progress happens when we care and whenever there is neglect we only reap destruction and despair. Appreciation is active when we strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being. It is never enough to simply give expression to appreciation and respect because we all realize that actions speak louder than words. A hypocrite is someone who is only feigning high principles thus being a charlatan and a fraud. It is only when we are caring in word and deed that we truly love our neighbor as ourselves. This is a basic and universal principle.

Clearly a most important question is: “Who am I?” As a part of the human life form in this mysterious and marvelous Universe you need to become aware of who you are and why you are here. Everything and everyone in our universe has a place and a purpose. As you delve into the depths of your being and open up to all that you are in body, mind, and emotion, you will become aware of your temporal and spiritual gifts that must be shared. This ongoing exercise and commitment is essential to your well being as well as to the whole of life itself. Until you understand the worth of your presence and your essential contribution in life, both you and our world will be deficient.

In every time and culture there are people who exemplify this ongoing commitment to maturity. Our secular and religious history tell the stories of those who stood out in their quest for such realization. In most cases these were just ordinary people. They became significant because of their awareness of a calling and their total involvement in becoming all that they could be in faithfulness to that calling. Their awareness of the creative forces in the universe stimulated their desire to see how they could connect to that creativeness and utilize their gifts to enhance the resourcefulness around them. They became uncomfortable with only trying to get things for personal benefit and recognized the need to include others to experience the joy of giving and serving. As a Christian I am made aware and challenged by this concept in the actions and words of Jesus, “I have come to serve, not to be served”.

Another life principle is giving. A significant part of our maturing is in learning how important it is to share and give. It is our childish nature that thinks “mine”. It often takes many years to think “our”. Selfishness is natural until one sees and understands the larger picture of our world and the universe. Perhaps if we think of Christmas at different stages in our lives we may begin to understand what I mean. We realize that our children will be primarily concerned with what they will get and it may take a while before they begin to think about giving to others. Usually, by the time we become parents, we are aware of giving to children that also includes other significant family members and friends. When we become grandparents our concern in giving broadens even further to others, especially to

grandchildren, rather than being concerned about what we may receive. As we mature we come to learn about give and take in life and gain our greatest joy in giving and sharing.

GIVE – Gratitude Inspiring Verifiable Expressions

I am sure that one's chronological age has less to do with such growth and development as may their aptitude and willingness to learn and be inspired by living well. Thanksgiving should not just be a day on our calendars as much as a good daily habit. As we grow in the inward and invisible grace of God's generosity we usually increase in sharing more readily in verifiable expressions. It is who you are as a person and the satisfaction of becoming all that you were meant to be that brings the wholeness and wellness that we all desire. As we mature in our role as humans we learn that giving and serving bring the most satisfaction of living well.

Persistence:

Having gained an appreciation for your universal heritage and come to an understanding of who you really are and want to be, the next most important concept is persistence.

Dale Carnegie once said, "Most of the important things in the world have been accomplished by people who have kept on trying when there seemed to be no hope at all." Recently President Obama said, "Making your mark on the world is hard. If it were easy, everybody would do it. But it's not. It takes patience, it takes commitment, and it comes with plenty of failure along the way. The real test is not whether you avoid this failure, because you won't. It's whether you let it harden or shame you into inaction, or whether you learn from it; whether you choose to persevere."

After we think about persistence we will be sharing some thoughts on perseverance. At first the two words may seem to be identical but their subtle difference may be important to consider. Those who miss the subtle differences in life often miss the point for full satisfaction and success. A comparison of synonyms may help you begin to see what I mean:

Persistence – determination, doggedness, pushiness, resolution

Perseverance – insistence, urgency, firmness, continuation

Dr. Jill Ammon-Wexler, a Pioneer brain/mind researcher, said, "If you were to select just one part of your personality to develop that would virtually guarantee your success -- I'd like to suggest you place the quality of persistence at the very top of your list."

She went on to quote, "In his classic "Think and Grow Rich," Napoleon Hill felt so strongly about persistence that he devoted an entire chapter to it. Hill said, "There may be no heroic connotation to the word persistence, but the quality is to your character what carbon is to steel."

Continuing she says, "Think about that for a moment. Just as carbon hardens steel -- persistence hardens your willpower to blast past any obstacles you encounter as you pursue your dreams. I've worked with people all of my professional life, and here's what I've observed: Very few have REALLY decided what they want from life ... and fewer still have committed to achieve it.

Why is this important? Because without clarity and commitment, there is no persistence. To develop the quality of persistence, you must want something so much that it becomes a burning desire -- a fire in your belly! Persistence is then virtually automatic, and you become unstoppable. It's commonly believed that a lack of persistence is the result of a weak willpower. This is NOT true! A

person can have a highly evolved willpower, but still lack the persistence needed to achieve their goals.

In most cases, those who lack persistence simply do not have a goal that lights their passion.”

Dr. Jill Ammon-Wexler then proposes four steps to develop persistence:

1. Create a clearly defined goal. Your goal must be something you truly desire. Because without emotional fire and desire, you will not be able to reach into the portion of your mind that can really drive you to achievement -- your subconscious.
2. Develop a plan of action and go to work immediately. It's perfectly OK if your plan just covers the first stage of the journey toward your goal. As you begin to execute your plan, you'll discover other steps that will take you closer.
3. Make an irrevocable decision to reject any negative feedback of friends, relatives or neighbors. Refuse to give any conscious attention to conditions or circumstances that appear to indicate your goal cannot be accomplished.
4. Establish a mastermind group of one or more people who will encourage, support and assist you.

Dr. Jill then closes with this important statement: As Napoleon Hill shared: In many cases persistence is the ONLY quality that separates highly successful men and women from everyone else. The present moment is your Point of Power. Whatever you dream of doing in your life -- just begin today, and refuse to quit. There is greatness in you. Just let it out, and be persistent.” (from: “Develop the Quality of ... Unstoppable Persistence” by Dr. Jill Ammon-Wexler, September 2005)

Perseverance:

Now I will close this part of learning to live well with this next most important word, Perseverance. The subtle difference between persistence and perseverance is the activity that will keep your progress going. It is one thing to be determined but you must keep that alive through insistence. You surely need to be dogged and pushy, but without a sense of urgency and being firm in your character you will not continue well in living well. Having the resolve to grow and develop in your calling is vital but it will not last long without the tenacity of continuation. These three words create the solidarity of making your life move toward all that you can be. Your persona stays alive with persistence and perseverance.