**Motivational Minutes for 2018**

1. **New Year**

**Quote of the day:**

“Don’t look further for answers: be the solution. You were born with everything you need to know. Make a promise to stop getting in the way of the blessing that you are. Take a deep breath, remember to have fun, and begin.” —Jonathan H. Ellerby

**Think about it:**

No one knows what the future holds. We’re quick to wish someone happiness and all the best at the beginning of a new year, but we actually have very little control over how things will play out.

It’s good to plan ahead and lay solid foundations in our personal and professional lives, but we know from the start that the future will have unforeseen events and circumstances that we may not be able to avoid or change. Perhaps in addition to wishing others happiness, we could also wish them courage and faith to face whatever the future may hold.

Whether you are about to start a New Year, a new career, or another event that’s a first for you, the posts on this blogare sure to encourage you that every day can be a fresh new beginning.

Here’s to faith and courage, and a bright and happy future!

1. **Building the Future**

**Quote of the day:**

“I think there is something more important than believing: Action! The world is full of dreamers. There aren’t enough who will move ahead and begin to take concrete steps to actualize their vision.” —W. Clement Stone

**Think about it:**

The end of a year is a good time to take stock of things, a chance for us to reflect on all that has happened over the last twelve months. It can be a bittersweet time, as there are experiences and people that have moved into our past.

But the end also brings a new beginning. Typically, the New Year is a time for resolutions and fresh starts, for looking forward to the future, for reviewing what worked last year and aiming to build on that.

As we enter this new year, news of famine, strife, and disasters may seem to indicate that the world has never been in a worse shape or more divided. The future may seem bleak, and the challenges ahead daunting, but we don’t have to be discouraged.

Gandhi wasn’t deterred by obstacles and circumstances: “It’s the action, not the fruit of the action, that’s important. You have to do the right thing. It may not be in your power, may not be in your time, that there’ll be any fruit. But that doesn’t mean you stop doing the right thing. You may never know what results come from your action. But if you do nothing, there will be no result.”

With 2018 officially here, let’s all resolve to make our lives, and the lives of those around us, better. Let’s be a little more caring, a little more unselfish, a little more courteous. Let’s work smarter instead of longer. Let’s spend time with those we care about instead of with our latest app. Let’s give a little more to those who aren’t as fortunate as we are. Let’s forget past slights and let’s build bridges of friendship around us. Let’s learn from past mistakes.

1. **We Can’t Do Without Change**

**Quote of the day:**

“Remember, if nothing ever changed, there’d be no butterflies.” – Author Unknown

**Think about it:**

I recently came across the above short quote. It made me stop and reflect on how important it is to continue to keep growing and changing—both personally and professionally. If I don’t, I’m in danger of stagnation, and I will probably end up feeling rather unfulfilled, regardless of how successful or accomplished my life may seem. I sat down and took a long and hard look at my situation, and I re-evaluated my current goals. Then I made a list of some things I definitely would like to change and improve in. It included a habit or two I know I need to break, and some personal and career goals I would like to reach. I also added some things to my list that would help improve the lives of others.

The next question was how to go about making these changes. The articles and stories I found on personal change and how to make improvements were inspiring, and a number of them were especially helpful, and seemed practical and doable. Taking a little time to refocus on my life’s goals had a good effect on me. I felt challenged and refreshed. It’s not always easy to admit that we need to change in different areas, and making those changes can be even harder. But ultimately, like that little quote I read, we can’t do without change—or “there’d be no butterflies.” – Author Unknown

**4.** **Look Where You’re Going**

**Quote of the day:**

“If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with success unexpected in common hours.” —Henry David Thoreau

**Think about it:**

A few weeks ago, I was taking the train to work like I usually do, and I realized that for some reason I always sat facing the back of the train so that as I looked out the window, I only saw

where I had been, not where I was going.

I have no idea what compelled me to always sit that way, but since the seat across from me was empty, I switched seats, and therefore, my vantage point. Although I’d never thought of the

difference before that day, seeing what was coming up rather than what had already been had a huge impact on me.

I noticed that when I sat facing the back of the train, all I really focused on was what was right next to the tracks—the graffiti-filled walls of warehouses, the guard rail next to the train, people’s back yards, etc. When I sat facing forward, the first thing that jumped out at me were the mountains. My viewpoint immediately changed from what was right in front of me to the bigger picture of where I was, and where I was headed.

This simple experience can be related to life and the way we act. If we are always looking back at where we’ve been and what we’ve done, there’s no way we can see where we want to be or

where we hope to end up. On the other hand, if we look forward and allow our minds to grasp the wonderful things we are capable of, we can plan for the future and be successful at it. We know where we’ve been. The key is to focus on where we’re going. -- By David Mead, adapted

**5. Love**

**Quote of the day:**

“Love is when the other person’s happiness is more important than your own.” —H. Jackson Brown, Jr.

**Think about it:**

Love is one of life’s sweetest mysteries. It can be ethereal or down-to-earth, thunderous and ardent, or tender and hushed. At once priceless and free, it’s the universal experience that is wonderfully personal. Like a scintillating jewel that reflects beauty off its many facets— each

unique, yet each part of the whole—is that mystical, magical, marvelous thing called love.

It’s in the faces of mother and child—mutual adoration that is beyond words. It is in the faces of parents as they embrace a returning son or daughter. It is in the faces of a couple in love, who are lost in each other’s eyes and dreams. It is in the faces of those who care for the afflicted,

the homeless, and the destitute. It is in the faces of strangers and friends—anyone who takes time to be thoughtful and kind.

Every time we see love manifested, we experience a touch of God’s love. This post doesn’t pretend to do the subject justice, but I hope the posts on this blog will touch your heart and fill it with that special kind of love that loves freely, unselfishly, without partiality, and without end.

If we each truly tried to put that kind of love into action, it would change the world. It wouldn’t change the whole world overnight, but before long it would change our world—our own lives and the lives we touch. Putting real love into action always makes a difference!

**6. A Single Step**

**Quote of the day:**

“A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step” -- Lao-tzu

**Think about it:**

A couple of years ago, I took an English teaching training course. My first language is Croatian, and I had been working as a professional translator and interpreter for over 20 years, so I spoke English on a daily basis and was quite happy to do some freelance English teaching from time to time.

However, I eventually realized that a teaching diploma would open more opportunities, and would also make it possible for me to teach and help those less fortunate to learn a new language. The good news is that since taking this training course, I’ve been able to pursue those opportunities I was looking for. I’ve worked with both adults and children, and I empathize with the trepidation and fear experienced by those who feel inadequate and unable to learn a

new language, which is why I often build my lessons around a pithy, motivational quote. This one, “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step” by Lao-tzu, is one of my favorites.

Starting out is always the hardest. When we are about to try something new in our lives, we often see it as a huge mountain in front of us, and we may just “know” that we will never be able to climb it.

True, it can be a daunting sight, especially when we compare ourselves with those who have been at the top for some time. But when we are able to overcome the initial fear and take that single step, we may just find ourselves on the road to victory. --By Milutin Bunčić, adapted

**7.** **The Next Generation**

**Quote of the day:**

“What many people fail to realize is that the world of tomorrow is what the adults of today make it, according to what they choose to give or not give the next generation.” — David Fontaine

**Think about it:**

I was a scrawny, asthmatic eight-year-old living in Asia with my family in the early 1980s when

an old family friend visited and informed me with a smile that she had taken care of me when I was a baby. I felt a special link with her.

As she reminisced with my parents, I knelt behind her and silently braided her honey-colored hair. It was my first attempt at braiding, and it turned out quite loose and unsymmetrical. But when I finished and I asked her how she liked it, she felt the back of her head and said, “It’s lovely! And it’s much more comfortable in this heat. Thank you for doing that for me.”

An eight-year-old who thought she wasn’t very good at many things gained a sense of worth and learned the reward of helping others in little ways.

A year or two later, also in Asia, we went for an all-day outing up a local “mountain” with a thousand stone steps. My asthma forced me to rest often, but it was worth the effort. When we reached the top, we explored a fascinating old museum that had once been a magnificent

palace and observed the lifestyle of bygone royalty in the carefully preserved, fully furnished rooms and lush, immaculately kept gardens.

The next day our teacher asked us to write an essay about our excursion. I became completely

absorbed in painstakingly documenting every event of the day—the hike up the mountain, the

monkeys we met on the way and how they took peanuts from our hands and ate them, the massive statue of a fierce warrior at the entrance of the palace, and every detail of the palace itself.

I was pleased with my essay and so was my teacher, but she gently explained that it’s usually better not to begin every sentence with “then.” She suggested some alternatives, and I liked the way they sounded.

Such constructive criticism and collaboration were new concepts to me, but the encouragement and help I received that day steered me toward a fulfilling career in writing and editing.

Whether we are a parent, teacher, caregiver, or “bystander,” we should never underestimate the influence we have on the children who share our world. Sometimes all it takes is an approving smile or an encouraging word to change a young life, and the love we give will come back to us. -- By Anaik Alcasas adapted

**8. Waiting**

**Quote of the day:**

“Do you have the patience to wait until your mud settles, and the water is clear? Can you remain unmoving until the right action arises by itself?” -- Lao Tzu

**Think about it:**

You might think of “waiting” as taking time, but it’s actually less about clock time and more about inner space. Of course, there are moments when our immediate gut-level response to a situation is a flash of intuition that can be trusted, moments when it’s crystal clear what needs to be done. But at other times, an experience stirs up some of that inner mud, and at those times, patience engages us in the process of becoming still.

An unclear mind, one in which right action isn’t obvious, isn’t a “bad” thing. Wisdom, after all, develops at the edges of our understanding. Our fundamental questions can frustrate us, or create a positive sense of wonder and possibility. The challenge is to develop enough stillness to allow the questions to pose themselves without judgment. This is where patience comes in. Needing answers isn’t the point—patience is in finding value in the questions, in and of themselves. The root word for question, after all, is “quest,” and so this spirit of adventure is embedded within true questioning.

That’s not to say that answers aren’t important. They do come, but often not the ones we’d expect, and often ones that open up to even deeper questions. In this way, those moments of fuzziness, when dealt with patiently, become opportunities to turn our boundaries into edges of exploration. When we think we know, we expect to find a solution in the direction in which we are looking; when we don’t know where to look, we remain open to all directions. But remaining open and “unmoving,” as Lao Tzu suggests, isn’t about being passive or lacking conviction. There’s lots of committed activity happening beneath the surface—it takes great effort and discipline to remain alert to what’s happening within. This sharp alertness awakens us to the power of the subtle: the mental seeds we sow become the roots of our skillful words and actions. And it is patience which creates that inner space.

First, the mud—our unexamined reactions and habituated patterns of interpretation—rises to the surface, but then eventually it settles. Our view clears. We find that those initial, rigid interpretations relax, and a multiplicity of perspectives emerge. We start to see in a way that is more real, more whole, truer, and we become freer to consciously choose our actions.

Through it all, the journey of patience is rooted in knowing that our current reality inevitably gives way to change. But change won’t always happen when we think it should, and patience with ourselves comes from accepting that there are things we can control and things we can’t. And though we must make diligent efforts to keep pushing the boundaries of our awareness and to deepen our ability to rest comfortably in the present moment, how fast we develop isn’t up to us. Patience, then, is a kind withholding of judgment and conclusion, a valiant invitation for our development to unfold just as it needs to. -- Adapted from Motivated magazine.

**9.** **Unsung Heroes**

**Quote of the day:**

“In our world of big names, curiously, our true heroes tend to be anonymous. In this life of illusion and quasi-illusion, the person of solid virtues who can be admired for something more substantial than his well-knownness often proves to be the unsung hero.” — Daniel Boorstin

**Think about it:**

God alone is aware of the vast quantity of heroic deeds taking place each day. If plaques were

given for each, there wouldn’t be enough space on all the walls in the world! Perhaps this was on my husband Michael’s mind when he wrote this song in appreciation of the many unsung heroes.

I saw you when no one noticed,

I watched you from day to day,

Observed your humble spirit,

Admired your simple ways.

I wondered what it had cost you

To so willingly play your part?

Until I could not hold back

The words that filled my heart:

You are the unsung hero

Letting your hopes and dreams go

That other lives may find what they’re dreaming of.

Giving yourself to the uttermost,

Holding on, no matter what the cost.

In all the world there is no greater love.

I’ve wanted so much to tell you,

But words seem so hard to find

To show the admiration

I feel so deep inside.

All of those unseen labors

That nobody seems to see

Are making your crown in heaven

That will shine eternally.

I couldn’t do what I do

Without you there to help me

through.

Our lives would know an emptiness Without your love and faithfulness. Even if we are never heard of and live out our lives as invisible stage hands in a great play, let’s do our part well and give others care and respect. We may get our name lit up one day—who knows what the future holds? But mostly, we’ll feel the satisfaction of seeing the ripple effect in others’ lives.

**10. Beautiful You**

**Quote of the day**:

“Always be a first-rate version of yourself instead of a second-rate version of someone else.” —Judy Garland

**Think about it:**

If all the flowers in the world were one color, or if there was only one type of tree, it would get boring after a while. Beauty is found in variety—the varying types and textures, hues and shades of nature.

When we try to change the way we are in order to meet someone else’s definition of beauty, we’re giving someone else control over us, over how we think, over our happiness. Who, after all, decides that one thing is better than another—hair that’s dark or light, curly or straight; bodies that are lean, muscular, or round; noses that are large or small; lips that are thin or full?

When we try so hard to fit a certain mold of beauty‚ whether it suits us or not or is realistic or not, we’re giving up our uniqueness.

One of the many problems associated with comparing ourselves with others or trying to fit into the fashionable standard of beauty is that we’re never going to be truly happy. We might feel a sense of satisfaction that we changed something we didn’t like, or kept up with the latest trend, but even if we do manage to achieve the level of beauty that we’re hoping for, even if we finally become the most popular person in our circle of acquaintances, it is not going to last. We’ll

eventually run into somebody who’s higher up on the physical beauty ladder.

If it’s happiness we’re looking for‚ we’re not going to find it like that. The constant need to meet the world’s standard of beauty leads to obsession—first the physical makeover, then the molding of our personality to fit our new image, then the struggle to keep the look or to keep up with the changing looks as each trend gives way to a new one.

Is it even possible to ever fit the world’s idea of perfect beauty? Not even celebrities can reach it, and they have plenty of money to change anything they want. And change they do, because the trends in what’s beautiful keep changing. Even the rich can barely keep up.

It’s human nature to want to be thought attractive, but true beauty is not only about physical appearance. It’s also about inner beauty, that spark that sets a person apart from the millions of others who are dressing the same way, getting the same haircut, and trying to achieve the same body.

We can save ourselves a lot of time, trouble, and grief if we clear our mind of everyone else’s perception of what is beautiful. It’s much better to focus on the specific qualities or features we’ve been given that make us unique. When we enhance those, it will bring out our best—and we’ll be the most beautiful. -- By David Fontaine, adapted

**11. The Power of Forgiveness**

**Quote of the day**:

“No one is born hating another person. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love.” – Nelson Mandela

**Think about it:**

Nelson Mandela was South African. Since his death, there has been a lot of emotion poured out by his countrymen. People wept. Eulogies flowed. Facebook grieved. Flags hung limply at half-mast. Everyone referred to him by using his intimate family names—Madiba and Tata. It felt like everyone in South Africa had lost a relative. World leaders paid homage. The man-in-the-street gave honor.

What’s not to pay tribute to? Jailed for 27 years in a tiny cell. Sentenced to hard labor in Robben Island prison quarry. Tortured by racists for being anti-racist. And then to be released and actively promote love for the enemy, all the while selflessly handing over power to a successor.

He disarmed everybody—literally. He charmed everybody—universally. He loved everybody—equally. He unified everybody—charismatically. His aim was to liberate both the oppressor and the oppressed. “For to be free,” he famously said, “is not merely to cast off one’s chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.”

He was the Leading Light of Forgiveness. “No one is born hating another person,” he said. “People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love.”

Forgiveness is the ability to treat an unworthy person as if they were altogether worthy. It is the planet’s most urgent need, for we all require it. Mourn the great man by all means. But why not also mourn the ways we do not forgive? We are in contradiction if we mourn the one but not the other.

We don’t have to be sentenced to hard labor on Robben Island to get an opportunity to forgive. We just need a boss, a spouse, a friend, a fellow train commuter, members of another race

group in our community, or 20 minutes in rush hour.

If we think we are superior, we’ll never forgive anyone. Mandela thought the interests of others were superior to his own. It promoted a unique brand of kindness. The problem is not that we

can’t be kind; it’s that we think we are superior and therefore have no need to be kind.

Opportunities for forgiveness are rife. They accost us every day. Sometimes I think people deify a hero in exchange for not having to act like the hero. It’s a transaction to ease the conscience. And heroes aren’t determined by the size of the audience. They are determined by the quality of their actions. We can forgive those who injure us. It’s just the sort of thing Mandela would do. How about you? --From Activated Magazine adapted

**12.** **Three Little Animals**

**Quote of the day**:

“Knowing what’s right doesn’t mean much unless you do what’s right.” -- Theodore Roosevelt

**Think about it**

The quote reminds me of a story. In the tale, three little animals build a house. The first house is made of straw, because the little animal who builds it wants quick results so he can go out quick and play. The second is a cheapskate and builds his house with sticks, because he doesn’t want to invest in strong materials. The third one builds his house of solid rock. Though it takes longer to build, this little animal is happy to invest the time and materials needed because he wants it to last. When the big bad wolf comes, he blows away the first two houses and eats the inhabitants, but he can’t break the house built with solid rock; in fact, it is so strong that the wolf dies trying to destroy it.

This is not only sound business advice but also good life advice. Be sure to build a strong character and encourage your loved ones to do the same.

**13**. **Free Ice Water**

**Quote of the day:**

“Life is like a tennis game; you can’t win without serving." – Author unknown

**Think about it:**

It may seem contradictory that to be successful we have to first focus on the needs of others.

Experts often compare recessions with the Great Depression of the 1930’s, where international trade slowed to 3/4ths of its former activity. Stories abound from this difficult time of how those who came through it developed resourcefulness, persistence, courage, and creativity to survive.

One story that stuck out to me was of a young couple, Ted and Dorothy, who bought a pharmacy in a small town out West in 1931. The small town that they set up the shop in had 326 people, all of them poor. Business was bad, yet they believed they were there to provide medical care to people who needed it.

They decided that they would stay 5 years before quitting. Finally, one afternoon, Dorothy was futilely trying to put her daughter down to take a nap. While noisy traffic passed by she thought, “I wonder what those travelers need. They must be hot and thirsty, so why don’t we put up some signs offering them free ice water?”

They followed through with her idea, and to their surprise people not only came for the ice water, but they also bought what they needed while stopping by. Ted had this to say, “Since then, we’ve never been lonely for customers. The next summer we had to hire 8 girls to help

us, and a few years later up to 20,000 customers would visit on a hot summer day.”

The store has grown to become a tourist attraction of international renown. Last year Ted’s store took in more than $10 million and drew about 2 million visitors to this tiny remote town.

The state governor said, “Ted’s a guy that figured out that free ice water could turn you into a phenomenal success in the middle of a semi-arid desert, way out in the middle of someplace.”

The store has faced many challenges, but they have met each one with the same spirit of hospitality that made them a success in the first place. They have stuck to the precept of: give and you will receive.–And yes, they still give free ice water, because people still get thirsty.

**14. Good Thoughts**

**Quote of the day:**

“You are today where your thoughts have brought you, you will be tomorrow where your thoughts take you.”-- Ralph Waldo Emerson

**Think about it:**

Most people give very little thought to what occupies their thinking and even fewer people understand that “good thoughts bear good fruit, bad thoughts bad fruit.” Most of us understand the law of sowing and reaping in other aspects of life, but we fail to understand that this same law is just as potent when our thoughts are involved.

A June 1997 story in the *Wall Street Journal* said that Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) reported that as much as 70 percent of all visits to a primary care physician are for a psychosomatic illness—a disorder that involves both mind and body. According to Dr. David Sobel, a primary care physician and author of the highly respected *Mind-Body Health Newsletter,* only 16 percent of people who visit their physician for common maladies like nausea, headache, and stomach upset are diagnosed with a physical, organic cause. That means that a whopping 84% are suffering from an illness that originated in THOUGHT!

And it’s not just our health that our thoughts affect. In *Make Your Life Worthwhile,* Emmet Fox wrote, “The more you think about your grievances or the injustices that you have suffered, the more such trials will you continue to receive; and the more you think of the good fortune you have had, the more good fortune will come to you.”

If you’ve never trained yourself in “positive thinking,” I challenge you to spend a day monitoring and recording your thoughts. Practice this priceless wisdom: “Fix your thoughts on what is true and good and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely, and dwell on the fine, good things in others. Think about all you can be thankful for and be glad about.”

Now that’s worth thinking about.

**15.** **Walk a Mile in His Shoes**

**Quote of the day:**

“I always prefer to believe the best of everybody--it saves so much trouble.”-- Rudyard Kipling

**Think about it:**

It’s not possible to literally walk a mile in the shoes of someone who is different from us. We can’t snap our fingers and try out being older, living with physical or mental ailments, being thinner or heavier, changing our looks, speaking a different language, having a different skin, hair or eye color, or living in a different country or social status. But to get as close as we can, we can try the following:

—Put ourselves in surroundings that are normally outside of our comfort zones, even for a short time, by traveling abroad, taking on a part-time job, or volunteering. Then observe, listen, and reflect.

—Imagine ourselves in the skin of that other person we used to judge, and think about what we’d be like in their situation. We might learn a lot by walking a mile in their shoes. We might find that we have more in common than we expected.

**16.** **I’m Sorry**

**Quote of the day:**

“An apology is the superglue of life. It can repair just about anything.” —Lynn Johnston

**Think about it:**

For years I monitored children during recess and playground activities. Between all the running,

jumping, rowdiness, and good natured play, someone would often end up getting run into, tripped, shoved, etc.

Often the child who had caused the accident would immediately raise his or her hands and say, “It’s not my fault” or “I didn’t do it on purpose!” But of course, establishing guilt wasn’t the immediate priority. The most important issue is the welfare of the “injured” one.

I saw this scene play out so many times that I finally realized that most of us have to learn empathy. It doesn’t come naturally. The children were confusing “I’m sorry” with an admission

of guilt, and since they hadn’t harmed anyone on purpose, they didn’t feel the need to feel sorry for them. But in life, like on the playground, we sometimes inadvertently hurt someone and need to apologize.

We may have reasons. Maybe we didn’t realize, we didn’t think things through, we didn’t consider the implications of our actions. Maybe there were extenuating circumstances, misunderstandings, others involved. Every story has at least two sides.

The problem is that when we say, “I’m sorry, but let me explain...” we’re usually turning the focus on ourselves instead of the one we’ve hurt. Then we become the victim of a misunderstanding. It’s sometimes helpful to offer clarifications if we can and give our side of the story. But first things first—did someone get hurt? An apology spoken with sincerity contains a healing balm.

Back to the playground. Another lesson I learned from 35 years of working with children—if we’re quick to apologize, the other side is usually quick to forgive. That’s the best part. --By Sally García, adapted

**17. Creative** **Silence**

**Quote of the day:**

“Silence is the element in which great things fashion themselves together.” -- Thomas Carlyle

**Think about it:**

Where I live, there are wide, sweeping farmlands, huge mountains jutting their peaks into the sky, and broad rivers lazily moving over rocks. The land is as peaceful as it always has been, but the people who live here, like anywhere in the world, are often stressed.

Dr. Hans Selye, a prominent medical research scientist, has observed, “In this hurry-up world we are subjecting ourselves to too many stresses. We hurry constantly and worry incessantly.”

Unfortunately, many have yet to learn to develop inner peace.

An excellent technique for overcoming stress is the practice of silence. It entails going into a quiet place and doing your best to be still and shift your mind into neutral. William James (1842–1910) said, “It is as important to cultivate your silence power as it is your word power.”

I recently read an interview with a rubber manufacturer who pointed out that his industry did not learn to make efficient tires until they were redesigned to absorb road shock rather than merely to resist it.

We too would be more successful if we learned to relax and let the pressures and stress of life flow right through us rather than rigidly battling them. --By Sumit Dhamija, adapted

**18.** **Don’t Be Afraid of Black Paint**

**Quote of the day:**

“Genuine beginnings begin within us, even when they are brought to our attention by external opportunities.” – William Bridges

**Think about it:**

Author Leonard Chang, once told a graduate student that the story he had written wasn’t working on many levels, and that he should shelve it and start something new. Unlike many others who heard such harsh criticism and panicked, this student just nodded thoughtfully, asked a few more questions, and then said, “Okay.”

Chang was surprised by his poise, and asked him why he wasn’t more upset. He told Chang that before he came to fiction he was a painter, and one of his favorite teachers used to walk around the studio and ask the students what they thought of the painting they were working on.

One day a student said, “This is the best thing I’ve ever done.” The teacher looked at the painting, nodded, then asked how attached he was to the painting. The student said he was very attached. The teacher took out a can of black paint and splattered it all over the canvas, and told the student to start over. “You must never get too attached to your work,” the teacher said.

Chang’s student said that incident had taught him the need for detachment, the importance of objectivity for his work. By telling him to shelve the story and start over, Chang had done the equivalent of throwing black paint over his painting, and he had to start with a fresh canvas. He processed this, accepted it, and moved forward. Chang then knew that this student would do well. He did indeed throw out his story and wrote another one, an intense story that would become the seed for a novel.

The point of this anecdote is that we should not overly attach ourselves to anything. By throwing out something that isn’t working and starting over, we allow ourselves the opportunity to find

something better. Don’t be afraid of black paint. – Author Unknown

**19.** **Less Criticism and More Celebrations**

**Quote of the day:**

“I always prefer to believe the best of everybody--it saves so much trouble.”-- Rudyard Kipling

**Think about it**:

Charles and Carla Coonradt tell the story of an immense, 19,000-pound whale, Shama, that is taught in Sea World, Florida, to jump 22 feet out of the water and perform tricks. How do you suppose they teach the whale to do that?

A typical managerial approach would be to mount a rope at 22 feet high out of the water, and encourage the whale to sail over it. “Jump, whale!” Maybe get a bucket of fish up there, reward the whale when it does the right thing. Set goals! Aim high! And you and I know the whale would stay right where it was.

The Coonradts say, “So how do the trainers at Sea World do it? Their number-one priority is to reinforce the behavior that they want repeated—in this case, to get a whale or porpoise to go over the rope. They influence the environment every way they can so that it supports the principle of making sure that the whale can’t fail.

They start with the rope below the surface of the water, in a position where the whale can’t help but do what’s expected of it. Every time the whale goes over the rope, it gets positive reinforcement. It gets fed fish, patted, played with, and most important, it gets that reinforcement.

“But what happens when the whale goes under the rope? Nothing—no electric shock, no constructive criticism, no developmental feedback, and no warnings in the personnel file. Whales are taught that their negative behavior will not be acknowledged.

“Positive reinforcement is the cornerstone of that simple principle that produces such spectacular results. And as the whale begins to go over the rope more often than under, the trainers begin to raise the rope. It must be raised slowly enough so that the whale doesn’t starve, either physically or emotionally. The simple lesson to be learned from the whale trainers is to over-celebrate. Make a big deal out of the good and little stuff that we want consistently. Secondly, under-criticize. People know when they screw up. What they need is help. If we under-criticize, punish and discipline less than is expected, people will not forget the event and usually will not repeat it.”

We need to make it difficult for people to fail, so there can be less criticism and more celebrations.

**20.** **Bringing Out the Best in People**

**Quote of the Day:**

“You are moving in the right direction when you clearly understand that others can give you pleasure but genuine happiness comes when you do things for others.” – Author Unknown

**Think about it:**

Some time ago in Toronto, I gave a speech to an executive club. After the meeting, an elderly man came up to talk. He was tall, slender, and elegantly dressed. At 74, he was retiring from a

lifetime of manufacturing lead pencils. I thought to myself, “What a boring way to make a living,” and said, “I’ll bet you’re glad to be getting out of that business, aren’t you?”

“Oh no,” he replied. “In fact, I’m going to miss it like crazy. And you know what I’m going to miss most? The friends I’ve made in this business. Some of my suppliers and customers have been my best friends for 40 years. And several of our upper-level managers are guys I hired right out of college. I’ve had a lot of satisfaction helping them succeed.”

As we talked, I learned that this man had built up a multi-million dollar company, and had recently sold it for a very large sum. His success should not be very surprising, however, considering his deep-rooted belief in people. He had mastered the art of finding the good

side of everyone and building on that, and in the process of helping other people succeed, he had made a lot of money as well.--Author unknown

**21. Flying High**

**Quote of the day:**

“A bird with a broken wing only needs mending, but once it has healed, it can fly higher than the rest.” – Author Unknown

**Think about it:**

By high school, T. J. was the most celebrated troublemaker in his town. Teachers literally cringed when they saw his name posted on their classroom lists for the next semester. He wasn’t very talkative, didn’t answer questions, and got into lots of fights. He had flunked almost every class by the time he entered his senior year, yet was being passed on each year to a higher grade level.

Teachers didn’t want to have him again the following year. T. J. was moving on, but definitely not moving up. I met T. J. for the first time at a weekend leadership retreat. All the students at school had been invited to sign up for ACE training, a program designed to have students become more involved in their communities. T. J. was one of 405 students who signed up.

When I showed up to lead their first retreat, the community leaders gave me this overview of the attending students: “We have a total spectrum represented today, from the student body president to T. J. Ware, the boy with the longest arrest record in the history of town.” Somehow, I knew that I wasn’t the first to hear about T. J.’s darker side as the first words of introduction.

At the start of the retreat, T. J. was literally standing outside the circle of students, against the back wall, with that “go ahead, impress me” look on his face. He didn’t readily join the discussion groups, didn’t seem to have much to say. But slowly, the interactive games drew him in.

The ice really melted when the groups started building a list of positive and negative things that had occurred at school that year. T. J. had some definite thoughts on those situations. The other

students in T. J.’s group welcomed his comments. All of a sudden T. J. felt like a part of the group, and before long he was being treated like a leader. He was saying things that made a lot of sense, and everyone was listening. T. J. was a smart guy, and he had some great ideas.

The next day, T. J. was very active in all the sessions. By the end of the retreat, he had joined the Homeless Project team. He knew something about poverty, hunger, and hopelessness. The other students on the team were impressed with his passionate concern and ideas. They elected T. J. co-chairman of the team. The student council president would be taking his instruction from T. J. Ware.

When T. J. showed up at school on Monday morning, he arrived to a firestorm. A group of teachers were protesting to the school principal about his being elected co-chairman. The very first communitywide service project was to be a giant food drive, organized by the Homeless Project team. These teachers couldn’t believe that the principal would allow this crucial beginning to a prestigious, three-year action plan to stay in the incapable hands of T. J. Ware.

They reminded the principal, “He has an arrest record as long as your arm. He’ll probably steal half the food.” The principal reminded them that the purpose of the ACE program was to uncover any positive passion that a student had and reinforce its practice until true change can

take place. The teachers left the meeting shaking their heads in disgust, firmly convinced that failure was imminent.

Two weeks later, T. J. and his friends led a group of 70 students in a drive to collect food. They collected a school record: 2,854 cans of food in just two hours. It was enough to fill the empty shelves in two neighborhood centers, and the food took care of needy families in the area for 75 days.

The local newspaper covered the event with a full-page article the next day. That newspaper story was posted on the main bulletin board at school, where everyone could see it. T. J.’s picture was up there for doing something great, for leading a record-setting food drive. Every day he was reminded about what he did. He was being acknowledged as leadership material.

T. J. started showing up at school every day and answered questions from teachers for the first time. He led a second project, collecting 300 blankets and 1,000 pairs of shoes for the homeless

shelter. The event he started now yields 9,000 cans of food in one day, taking care of 70 percent of the need for food for one year.

T. J. reminds us that a bird with a broken wing only needs mending. But once it has healed, it can fly higher than the rest. T. J. got a job. He became productive. He is flying quite nicely

these days. --By Chalsey Dooley, adapted

**22.** **Values**

**Quote of the day:**

“Values are like fingerprints. Nobody's are the same, but you leave 'em all over everything you do.”-- Elvis Presley

**Think about it:**

Whether we are consciously aware of them or not, we all have a core set of personal values. Values can range from the practical, such as the belief in hard work and punctuality, to the more intangible, such as concern for others, gratitude, integrity, generosity, commitment, and the list goes on.

When we examine the lives of successful people, we often see how personal values guided them and propelled them to the top in their fields. Just as individual people subscribe to values, so do organizations and businesses. In fact, if we look at a successful company, we will most likely find that one or more business values were the key to their success.

Being fully aware of and living by our own unique set of values can change and improve the quality of how we live our life. We can energize our life by making a conscious effort to implement the values we hold.

Once we identify values that are meaningful to us, we can develop a plan to put them into practice. We may even find that good things suddenly start to happen to us from seemingly out of nowhere, exceeding our expectations and what we thought logical and possible.

**23.** **Grow Great by Dreams**

**Quote for the day:**

“Define your future by your dreams and not by your memories, by your hopes and not by your fears.”-- Joe Tye

**Think about it:**

The question was once asked of a highly successful businessman: “How have you done so

much in your lifetime?”

He replied, “I have dreamed. I have turned my mind loose to imagine what I wanted to do. Then I have gone to bed and thought about my dreams. In the night, I dreamed about my dreams. And when I awoke in the morning, I saw the way to make my dreams real. While other people were saying, ‘You can’t do that, it isn’t possible,’ I was well on my way to achieving what I wanted.”

As Woodrow Wilson, 28th President of the U.S., said, “We grow great by dreams. All big men are dreamers. They see things in the soft haze of a spring day or in the red fire on a long winter’s evening. Some of us let these great dreams die, but others nourish and protect them; nourish them through bad days until they bring them to the sunshine and light, which comes always to those who sincerely hope that their dreams will come true.”

Don’t let anyone steal your dreams, or try to tell you they are too impossible. “Sing your song, dream your dreams, hope your hope, and pray your prayer.”

**24.** **Focus Your Thinking**

**Quote of the day:**

“People think focus means saying yes to the thing you've got to focus on. But that's not what it means at all. It means saying no to the hundred other good ideas that there are. You have to pick carefully.”--Steve Jobs

**Think about it:**

That quote reminded me of what Brain Cavanaugh had to say about focusing your thoughts.

On a clear, bright sunny day, take a powerful magnifying glass and a stack of newspapers and go outside for an experiment. Hold the magnifying glass over a pile of crumpled pages. Even though you are magnifying the power of the sun’s rays through the glass lens, you will never start a fire—if you keep moving the glass. But if you hold the magnifying glass still, allowing it to focus the rays in a concentrated beam of sun energy, you harness the power of the sun and multiply it through the lens—starting a fire.

Try focusing your power of thought and ignite your wandering ideas.

**25.** **The Problem is not the Person**

**Quote of the day:**

*“*Human beings seldom step outside of themselves to really grasp the needs and fears of others. We often project our own thoughts and beliefs upon strangers, and make judgments based upon how we think they ‘should’ be living their lives.” -- Chelle Thompson

**Think about it:**

Keith Phillips writes. At 6’ 5” (nearly 2 m) and over 500 lbs (225 kg), Sam was an imposing figure. Add his constant, menacing glare and he was downright scary. The first few times we saw him, my wife Caryn and I gave Sam a wide berth. Then one evening Caryn struck up a conversation. After some small talk, Sam told her his story. When he was a child, he and his younger brother were playing in the street in front of their house when his brother was hit by a car and killed. Sam was blamed. “All I ever heard after that was that I was bad. Finally I figured that since everybody thought I was bad, I might as well *be* bad. I didn’t even have to turn green like the Hulk to get violent, I was so angry.” He was like that for the next 20 years. We have since come to know a very different Sam—sensitive, intelligent, insightful, articulate. With a little understanding and acceptance, he is beginning to blossom. We couldn’t have been more wrong about Sam.

Nancy’s problem was etched into her features. Long-term addiction will do that. She was a nurse when the younger of her two daughters, then three, was diagnosed with a terminal illness. For ten years Nancy watched helplessly as her daughter deteriorated and eventually died. In Nancy’s own words, she “didn’t handle it well.” She turned to alcohol and drugs. Now, after many years of addiction, Nancy is taking a stand against it. She has cut off contact with anyone from that life and attends support group meetings almost every day. It’s a daily struggle, but she fights on.

How easy it would be to write off all the Sams and the Nancys as hopeless losers. Many people do. But God’s not like that. And He expects more from us.

Often our world is all we know. Our world has been shaped by our experience—where we have

been, who we have known, what we have done—as well as by our habits, standards, and aspirations. When we see a man sleeping in a doorway or a woman asking for help in a slurred voice, we compare their condition with our world.

We may assume there is something fundamentally wrong with someone in such a state.

In truth, poverty puts people into a different world. The homeless person sleeping in the doorway may not have been able to rest the night before because he was guarding his few possessions. That woman may have an untreated medical condition that affects her speech.

Someone has suggested that to understand others, we should walk a mile in their shoes. But can I walk in the shoes of a single mother who is homeless, sick, battling an addiction to prescription drugs that she acquired in the hospital, and has had her children taken from her and placed in foster care? How can I possibly ever feel what she feels? I can’t walk in her shoes, but I can ask if she’d like to talk, to tell me her story, to tell me how it feels in her shoes.

We may both benefit.

**26.** **What am I?**

**Quote of the day;**

“The greatest discovery of my generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitudes.” — William James

**Think about it:**

I am seldom considered, though I do more to influence everything about you than virtually any one thing in your life. I often control the time you get up in the morning, the time you go to sleep, what you eat and drink, and the very thoughts that run through your head. I can make you either happy or sad, loving or hateful, cheerful or remorseful, congenial or spiteful, and in doing so, control the very capacity that you have for success.

No, you don’t often think of me, instead you blame the problem I create on the shortcomings of others, or the state of the economy, or your family or a million other reasons. Often, when you are unable to find anyone else to blame, you look for shortcomings within yourself on which to lay the blame.

When my impact on your life is considered fully in your every thought and action, when you are mindful of my awesome power, when you nurture and groom me for positive use in your life,

I can become more contagious than the most prolific disease ever witnessed by man. My influence will spread to every person you come in contact with.

Groomed and nurtured in a positive manner, there will be no person or obstacle that can stand in the way of my success, or fail to be impacted for the better.

I Am Your Attitude!

**27. Who Is Trevor Huddleston?**

**Quote of the day:**

“Each person is a V.S.P. (Very Special Person) because we are each created in the image of God.” — Desmond Tutu

**Think about it:**

All of us have heard of Desmond Tutu, but few of us will know who Trevor Huddleston is. Yet, without Trevor Huddleston there may have been no anti-apartheid leader named Tutu.

Asked by the BBC to identify the defining moment in his life, Desmond Tutu spoke of the day he and his mother were walking down the street. Tutu was nine years old. A tall white man dressed in a black suit came towards them. In the days of apartheid, when a black person and a white person met while walking on a footpath, the black person was expected to step into the gutter to allow the white person to pass and nod their head as a gesture of respect. But this day, before a young Tutu and his mother could step off the sidewalk, the white man stepped off the sidewalk and, “as my mother and I passed, tipped his hat in a gesture of respect to her!”

The white man was Trevor Huddleston, an Anglican priest who was bitterly opposed to apartheid. It changed Tutu’s life. When his mother told him that Trevor Huddleston had stepped off the sidewalk because he was a man of God, Tutu found his calling. “When she told me that he was an Anglican priest, I decided there and then that I wanted to be an Anglican priest too. And what is more, I wanted to be a man of God,” said Tutu.

Huddleston later became a mentor to Desmond Tutu, and his commitment to the equality of all human beings, due to their creation in God’s image, was a key driver in Tutu’s opposition to apartheid.

**28. A Simple Idea**

**Quote of the day:**

“Your mind is the most marvelous bio-computer ever created. It does not deal with vague ideas; it is activated by specifics." - Denis Waitley

**Think about it:**

Back in the 19th century, two brothers had an idea that eventually became their passionate and consuming dream. Their relentless pursuit of that dream was rewarded with an accomplishment that changed world travel.

On Friday December 17, 1903 at 10:35 AM, the Wright brothers (Wilbur and Orville) achieved their dream. They flew “the world’s first power-driven, heavier-than air machine in which man made a free, controlled, and sustained flight.” This memorable feat took place at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina on a cold windy morning.

The dream started with an idea that was planted in their minds by a toy given to them by their father. In the words of the boys, “Late in the autumn of 1878, our father came into the house

one evening with some object partly concealed in his hands, and before we could see what it was, he tossed it into the air. Instead of falling to the floor, as we expected, it flew across the room till it struck the ceiling, where it fluttered awhile, and finally sank to the floor.” This simple toy made of bamboo, cork, and stretched rubber bands, fascinated the Wright brothers and sparked their lifelong interest in human flight.

The Wright brothers were great thinkers. They enjoyed learning new things. Initially, they recycled broken parts, built a printing press and opened their own printing office. Their interest moved to bicycles and in 1893, they opened the Wright Cycle Company where they sold and repaired bicycles. But Wilbur (the older brother) had his mind set on something more exciting.

He decided to pursue flying seriously. The brothers spent many hours researching, testing their machines, and making improvements after unsuccessful attempts at human flight. What started out as a hobby soon became a passion. With determination and patience, they realized their dream in 1903.

The next time you hear or see an airplane or travel on one, remember where it all started. A simple idea conceived in the minds of two young men who did not finish high school. Believe it or not, they did not have a University degree in Aeronautical Engineering, Mathematics, Physics

or any other subject. They were not scientists in the true sense of the word. In fact, many of their peers who did not witness their accomplishment, had trouble believing that two bicycle mechanics from Dayton, Ohio did what they claimed.

What idea or ideas are YOU working on? Have you said you can’t do this or that because you are not a scientist? Have you limited yourself by saying you are not smart enough? Or have you joined the majority in saying that everything has already been invented or discovered?

Since the introduction of the first generation of personal computers in 1981, we are able to do many things more efficiently. With a super computer between your ears and the personal

computer at your fingertips, your dream can be achieved. First, give birth to that dream with an idea. A simple idea that ANYONE of us can conceive.

**29. Bank Credit**

**Quote of the day:**

“Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today. Let us begin.” -- Mother Teresa

**Think about it**

Suppose your bank account was credited $86,400 every day, but with the catch that you couldn’t save any of this money. Every evening, the bank would cancel whatever part of that amount you had failed to use during the day. The fact of the matter is that every morning, we’re credited with 86,400 seconds, 1,440 minutes, or 24 hours. Every night, the bank of time writes off as lost whatever time you failed to invest. It carries no balances. It allows no overdrafts. Each day, the bank of time opens a new account with you, and each night, it burns up the records of the day. If you fail to use the day’s deposit, you must take the loss.

You might think: I’ll take 86,400 in currency rather than inseconds*,* please.But how valuable do you think that money would be if you’ve got no time to spend it? Don’t let that happen to you.

**30. Kings and Queens**

**Quote of the day:**

“To be a king and wear a crown is a thing more glorious to them that see it than it is pleasant to them that bear it.” – Queen Elizabeth

**Think about it:**

Some years ago there was a popular song about righting all the wrongs in the world. I don’t remember all the words, but the gist of it was, “If I were king of the world, I would do things differently.” There would be no more war, or hate, or suffering, or any of the other evils that

plague our planet.

It is a noble thought, at least on the surface, but it failed to take into consideration one important factor: we have each been given free will, free choice. In that sense, we are each “kings of the world.” We may not rule over the whole world or be able to make a visible impact on the grand scheme of things, but it is given to us to rule our own personal world. Depending on how well we do at that, we may then be able to have a positive impact on the world around us. As kings and queens we have both dominion and responsibility.

Queen Elizabeth I of England said, “To be a king and wear a crown is a thing more glorious to them that see it than it is pleasant to them that bear it.” In other words, it’s not always easy to rule, especially not wisely and justly. In fact, if you will take an honest look at your realm, I think you will realize that it’s humanly impossible to always rule well. You can’t always get it right, nor can you expect those around you to. But the good news is that although we won’t always get it right and will not be perfect from one moment to the next, God can help us moment by moment to have the love, humility, wisdom, understanding, and everything else we need to “rule justly” if we ask Him to. -- By Keith Phillips, adapted

**31. Just Listen**

**Quote of the Day:**

“The real beginning of influence comes as others sense you are being influenced by them – when they feel understood by you – that you have listened deeply and sincerely, and that you are open.” -- Stephen Covey

**Think about it:**

I suspect that the most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen. Just listen. Perhaps the most important thing we ever give each other is our attention, especially if it’s given from the heart. When people are talking, there’s no need to do anything but receive them. Just take them in. Listen to what they’re saying, and care about it. Most times caring about it is even more important than understanding it. It has taken me a long time to believe in the power of simply saying, “I’m so sorry,” when someone is in pain—and meaning it.

One of my patients told me that when she tried to tell her story, people often interrupted to tell her that they once had something just like that happen to them. Subtly her pain became a story about themselves. Eventually she stopped talking to most people. It was just too lonely. We connect through listening. When we interrupt what someone is saying to let them know that we understand, we move the focus of attention to ourselves. When we listen, they know we care. Many people with cancer can talk about the relief of having someone just listen.

I have even learned to respond to someone crying by just listening. In the old days I used to reach for the tissues, until I realized that passing a person a tissue may be just another way to shut them down, to take them out of their experience of sadness and grief. Now I just listen. When they have cried all they need to cry, they find me there with them. This simple thing has not been that easy to learn. It certainly went against everything I had been taught since I was very young. I thought people listened only because they were too timid to speak, or did not know the answer. A loving silence often has far more power to heal and to connect than the most well intentioned words. -- By Rachel Naomi Remen, adapted

**32.** **Mother’s Vase**

**Quote of the day**:

“Unless we are sensitive to another person, and take time to hear the meaning in what they are saying to us, we may well miss a precious moment to connect.” – Author Unknown

**Think about it:**

One day I was lying on my bed, reading, when my mother came into the room. She held out a vase—a rather ugly one—and asked, “Would you like to have this vase?”

I replied quickly, “No, I don’t want it.” As she turned to walk away, something said to me, “Wait a minute, not so fast.” So I asked, “Where did you get it?”

She said, “Oh, I got it when I filled an order.” Filled an order? I thought.

So I asked, “What do you mean, filled an order?”

“Well,” she said, “when I was a little girl, the Smith Company mailed catalogs to people. I would take the catalog around the neighborhood, and I’d get people to order from it. When I filled an order and sent it in, they gave me a prize. One time, I got a porch swing for my family.”

Now you have to understand that my mother is 81 years old. She is one of six children in a family that her father deserted when she was quite young. Money was real hard to come by. My grandmother managed to keep the family together through the years, although I don’t know how. For my mother to win a luxury like a porch swing was a significant accomplishment. Although she no longer had the swing, she had the vase—a vase full of meaning—which she offered to me.

“Mom, I want the vase,” I said spontaneously.

The vase now has a prominent place in my living room. It symbolizes a precious moment that my mother and I shared. I learned that day that unless we are sensitive to another person, and take time to hear the meaning in what they are saying to us, we may well miss a precious moment to connect. -- Author Unknown

**33.** **The Power of Being Thankful Even When Things Go Wrong**

**Quote of the day**:

“If you want to feel rich, just count all of the things you have that money can't buy.” -– Author Unknown

**Think about it:**

Things weren’t going Elise’s way. She had had a great career in tech—she had worked for Apple. But she had a flu that wouldn’t go away. It lingered for months on end, and she couldn’t work anymore. After spending much of her life savings, she still couldn’t get over her “flu.” She didn’t know what was wrong. As if things weren’t difficult enough, her close friend and roommate died of a brain tumor. At 42 years old, Elise had to move back in with her parents.

“I felt like a complete failure,” Elise told me. “If you don’t have your health, you don’t have anything.” Watching television with her mother each night, she’d grip her hand, worried that she’d lose her parents, too. But Elise focused on the things that were good in her life. “I felt incredibly thankful and grateful that I had these wonderful parents in my life.” Her parents loved to cook. Eventually, they let her help, when she had the energy. She also knew how to code. She started posting recipes online—hand-coded in HTML.

“Every day, I could choose between feeling sorry for myself, or I could just take a deep breath, go with it, and add a recipe to the website….”

Two years after moving back in with her parents, Elise had a relapse. She was spending almost the entire day in bed, but she kept posting recipes. She connected with her readers and other food bloggers, but she kept quiet about the mysterious illness that threatened to drown her spirits.

Elise told herself, “I’m just going to keep my mind focused on everything that is good and joyful and loving and wonderful in this world and in my life, and see what I can do to bring some of that to other people.”

*“SimplyRecipes* was my ‘treasure place.’ It was where there was just goodness and love…. Everything about that site for me was about love and family and this little bright spot in my life that—if I looked around—just seemed really, really, really dark.”

Today, a decade and a half later, Elise Bauer’s *SimplyRecipes* is one of the most popular recipe sites on the Internet. Elise has personally posted about 1,600 recipes. And the illness that kept her in bed has passed. If things aren’t going your way, concentrate on the things that are good. Like a crack on a sidewalk, or a snowball tumbling down a hill, they’ll grow and multiply. The next thing you know, the darkness will have been drowned out, and you may have built something great.

That’s the power of being thankful. -- By David Kadavy, adapted

**34.** **The Gratitude Jar**

**Quote of the day**:

"You won't be happy with more until you're happy with what you've got.” -- Viki King

**Think about it:**

Sometimes I wake up and my first thought is I didn’t get enough sleep and it goes on and on until the end of the day. I call this The “Never Enough” Problem Never good enough. Never thin enough. Never clever enough. Never pretty enough. Never rich enough. Never successful enough. We could all fill in the blank of “never \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ enough.” We spend our lives calculating how much we have, how much we want, and how much we don’t have. And we compare this to what everyone else has (or to the visions of perfection we get from the media)—a self-defeating cycle that will always end with the same conclusion: We are lacking. We never have enough. We never are enough. But there is an answer to the “Never Enough” problem: Gratitude.Gratitude is what makes the glass half full. It reminds you that you have enough and that you are enough.

I created a *Gratitude Jar* a couple of months ago. It started as nothing special, just an old-fashioned glass jar with a ribbon tied around the rim. Every day, sometimes several times a day, I write down what I am grateful for and add these “Gratitude Notes” to my jar. And remarkable things have happened. My outlook on life has shifted. I no longer feel like I am inadequate and lacking from the moment I wake up, or berate myself for not getting through my to-do list. I appreciate the food that I have, the time that I have, the people that I have.

Appreciating yourself for your strengths AND your imperfections (not in spite of them), allows you to find a sense of belonging and to feel more connected to life. When I have a down day (we all have them!), a quick glance at my *Gratitude Jar* reminds me that life is full of wonderful things to be grateful for and I have the strength and support to overcome anything.

But having gratitude doesn’t just happen! It’s a practice we have to foster every day. You wouldn’t expect a flower to grow without water, and you wouldn’t expect your body to get healthier without nourishing it. So you can’t expect to feel like you have enough and you are enough, without nurturing a gratitude for life and an appreciation of yourself.

Sometimes it’s the simple things that make life wonderful. Taking time to appreciate those moments of joy helps you to cherish your life and yourself.

**35.** **The Healing Power of Gratitude**

**Quote of the day:**

"As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.” -- John Fitzgerald Kennedy

**Think about it:**

Do you want more from your life? More happiness? Better health? Deeper relationships? Increased productivity? What if I told you that gratitude can help you in all of those areas? Gratitude makes us healthier. Gratitude can’t cure cancer (neither can positive-thinking), but it can strengthen your physiological functioning. Positive emotion improves health. The details are complicated, but the overall picture is not—if you want to improve your health, improve your mind. This confidence comes from 137 research studies.

Gratitude is a positive emotion. It’s no far stretch that some of the benefits (e.g. better coping of conditions like cancer and HIV, faster recovery from certain medical procedures, positive changes in immune system functioning, more positive health behavior, etc.) apply to gratitude as well. In fact, some recent science shows just that—those who engage in gratitude practices have been shown to feel less pain, go to the doctor less often, have lower blood pressure, and be less likely to develop a mental disorder.

Gratitude improves your sleep. Gratitude increases sleep quality, reduces the time required to fall asleep, and increases sleep duration. Said differently, gratitude can help with insomnia. The key is what’s on our minds as we’re trying to fall asleep. If it is worries about the kids, or anxiety about work, the level of stress in our body will increase, reducing sleep quality, keeping us awake, and cutting our sleep short. If it’s thinking about a few things we have to be grateful for today, it will induce the relaxation response, knock us out, and keep us that way. Yes—gratitude is a (safe and free) sleep aid.

Gratitude makes you more likely to exercise. In one 11-week study of 96 Americans, those who were instructed to keep a weekly gratitude journal exercised 40 minutes more per week than the control group. No other study has yet to replicate these results. It could be because other gratitude studies testing this effect have been much shorter—in the range of one to three weeks, or it could be because this result was a fluke. Once again, time will tell—but it would not surprise me if being grateful for one’s health would increase one’s tendency to want to protect it by exercising more.

Gratitude helps us relax. Gratitude and positive emotion in general are among the strongest relaxants known to man. Gratitude is no cure-all, but it is a massively underutilized tool for improving life-satisfaction and happiness. In the hustle of to-do lists and work deadlines, sometimes it’s (too) easy to block out the details of the day, forgetting that each and every day holds precious gifts. From the air we breathe to the friendships we hold close, there is always something to be thankful for.

Are you a grateful person? Thankful for the good things—big and small—in your life? --By Amit Amin, adapted

**36. He Might Have Become a Grocer**

**Quote of the day:**

“Honesty pays.” – Author Unknown

**Think about it:**

When he was a teenager, Jim worked for a grocer in Hamilton, Missouri. He liked the work and had plans to make a career of it. One night he came home and proudly told his family about his sly employer. The grocer had a practice of mixing low quality coffee with the expensive brand and thus increasing his profit. Jim laughed as he told the story at the supper table.

His father didn't see anything funny about the practice. "Tell me," he said, "if the grocer found someone palming off an inferior article on him for the price of the best, do you think he would think they were just being sly, and laugh about it?"

Jim could see his father was disappointed in him. "I guess not," he replied. "I guess I just didn't think about it that way."

Jim's father instructed him to go to the grocer the next day and collect whatever money was due him and tell the grocer he wouldn't be working for him any longer. Jobs were not plentiful in Hamilton, but Jim's father would rather his son be unemployed than associated with a crooked businessman.

J.C. Penny came that close to becoming a grocer. Instead he founded the retail chain that still bears his name. He shares the secret of his success in the title of his autobiography: Fifty Years with the Golden Rule.

There are two lessons here: Building character in this crooked world and teaching others to do the same.

**37. Christmas Reflection**

**Quote of the day:**

“My idea of Christmas, whether old-fashioned or modern, is very simple: loving others. Come to think of it, why do we have to wait for Christmas to do that?”-- Bob Hope

**Think About It:**

Here’s a little Christmas reflection by Jason Lawrence. Someone recently asked me if I thought they were crazy for dressing up like elves, Santa Claus, and Mrs. Santa, and going around like that at Christmastime.

Not at all! Well, maybe a *little*, but many people love this time of year and see it as a joyous occasion when they can have a time of sharing goodwill toward others. And if you are a Christian, it’s a great time to get out and show God’s love to folks, and I think the Lord sees it this way too. Even if it’s not exactly the day of His birth, it’s the thought that counts, and many folks are thinking of the baby Jesus more at Christmas than any other time of the year.

Santa Claus is a personification of giving! As God gave the world the gift of Jesus Christ, Saint Nicholas, who was an Orthodox Christian bishop in the Turkish Empire around 280 AD, named Father Nicholas, was known for his gift-giving. The legend of Santa Claus (Saint Nicholas) grew out of his example of sharing and giving.

He is also known as Father Christmas, Père Noël, Papá Noel, Babbo Natale, and Saint Nick, which is also a short name for Nicholas, as is Claus. So you see, Father Christmas or Santa Claus can still be the personification of love and the gift of Jesus, God’s love-gift to the world, and it can remind people to try to be positive and a good Christian example to others at this time of year.

So, I’m okay with Santa, and he’s okay with me! So do I think you’re crazy for dressing up like Santa at Christmastime? Probably just a little, but hey, crazy is fun if it brings joy and happiness to someone! But if I think you guys are crazy, it’s okay, because I’m a little crazy too!

**38. Meaningful Life**

**Quote of the day**:

“The proper function of man is to live, not to exist. I shall not waste my days in trying to prolong them. I shall use my time.” — Jack London

**Think about it**:

One of the central questions that people everywhere have struggled with for millennia is the mystery of what gives life meaning. Everyone wants to be happy and feel fulfilled, but how can we tell what true happiness and fulfillment is and where it comes from?

The ancient Greeks believed that the source of happiness was internal and could be cultivated by living a worthwhile life. They called this eudemonia, which Aristotle described as taking part in activities that draw on our talents and challenge our abilities, acting in ways that benefit others, and guiding our lives by principles and virtues. It isn’t enough to simply possess an ability or talent—eudemonia requires it to be put into action with kind deeds.

Living an honest and principled life dedicated to helping others sounds good, but it’s not always easy. Our imperfect human nature often gets in the way. Still, the more we learn to put the well-being of others at the center of our thoughts and actions, the more meaning and purpose our lives will have.

I hope the posts I have shared with you this year have inspired you, and will contribute to making your life both meaningful and worthwhile.