**Motivational Minutes on Building Up Others from 2015**

**(Also see Kindness and Character files.)**

1. **Respect**

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**Quote of the day:**

“Courtesies of a small and trivial character are the ones which strike deepest in the grateful and appreciating heart.” — Henry Clay

**Reflection:**

Everyone likes to be treated with respect and one way to show respect is by using good manners. Good manners are much like a roadmap, providing simple skills and techniques of common courtesy that can improve all our relationships and bring deep appreciation into the hearts of others.

However, it does take work to incorporate thoughtful behavior into the way we live and work, and there's no such thing as a vacation from good manners and politeness. A well-mannered person behaves nicely toward everyone, all the time. Demonstrating good manners is a lifestyle and not something that you can turn on when needed. Etiquette and proper decorum has to become part of your makeup and your everyday routine, or it's not likely that you'll be able to do well when you need it the most.

If you feel like you need a little help in this area, but you don't know where to start, don't despair. Improving your conduct simply takes making a conscious effort and a little practice! Start by becoming aware. Try to grade yourself on how you generally conduct yourself socially and professionally currently, noting areas where you stand to improve. Begin by asking yourself how you feel after an event or encounter. Do you later regret your comments or behavior? Did you overreact or respond in anger? Make a mental note where you can make positive changes, jot down a list, or keep a journal of the areas you would like to improve in. Check it weekly or monthly to see whether you've made progress.

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1. **Become Interested In Others**

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**Quote of the day**:

“You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you.” — Dale Carnegie

**Reflection**:

In the book “Positive Words, Powerful Results” by Hal Urban I found a wonderful way to do just this along with keeping the conversation on a positive note.

He tells the following story:

*I grew up in an era in which virtually all families ate dinner together, I maintained the same tradition in my family. For ten years I was a single father with three sons. One of the things I noticed as the kids got older was that they wanted to spend less time at the dinner table. But I insisted that it be a time of family sharing. Since the kids weren't all that keen on the idea, I felt it was my responsibility to come up with topics that would hold their interest. I came up with an absolutely brilliant idea: The question of the night. I would ask my sons who their favorite teacher was, what their favorite subject was, what their favorite sport was, etc. The question of the night remained brilliant for about two weeks. It was then that the question supply began to approach the empty mark. One night while I was preparing dinner, I kept drawing blanks on a good question. The kids had grown to like it, so as soon as we all sat down, one of them asked, "So, Dad, what's the question of the night?" I had to admit to that I didn't have one but I said, "Instead of a question, how about if you each tell me what was the best thing that happened to you today? What was the highlight of your day?" Purely by accident and out of desperation I had stumbled on the magic question! The kids all had something funny, heartwarming, or interesting to share. They also wanted to know what my highlight was. Over the years they learned a lot about my teaching career and about why I enjoyed it so much, and I learned about the things that were important to them.*

Adapting this suggestion to all conversations I have found that it makes an excellent conversation starter in any situation, to show your interest in others. You can learn so much about people this way, while affirming their worth at the same time. Why not try it at your dinner table, or in any conversation, and see what you come up with?

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1. **No Ulterior Motives**

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**Quote of the day:**

“Did you ever stop to think that a dog is the only animal that doesn't have to work for a living? A hen has to lay eggs; a cow has to give milk; and a canary has to sing. But a dog makes his living by giving you nothing but love!” — Dale Carnegie

**Reflection:**

Dale also goes on to say in his book, *How To Win Friends and Influence People*, “Why read a book to find out how to win friends? Why not study the technique of the greatest winner of friends the world has ever known? Who is he? You may meet him tomorrow coming down the street. When you get within ten feet of him, he will begin to wag his tail. If you stop and pat him, he will almost jump out of his skin to show you how much he likes you. And you know that behind this show of affection on his part, there are no ulterior motives.”

I love dogs and find that using the “dog technique” really works. When you show a genuine interest in people, are happy to see them with no ulterior motives and accept them unconditionally it's a sure way to win friends. Why not try it and see what happens?

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1. **See The Good Qualities**

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**Quote of the day:**

“If you train your mind to search for the positive things about other people, you will be surprised at how many good things you can observe in them and comment upon.” — Alan Loy Mcginnis

**Reflection:**

The following story illustrates this quote:

*A lady came to the judge because she wanted to divorce her husband. There were many little things in their relationship which she thought good enough reasons to break up their marriage, so when the judge asked, "Well, what is wrong?" the lady answered, "Oh, he doesn't hang up his clothes and he sometimes sits at the table without having washed his hands ... ," and on and on and on she went. But when the judge asked her, "Well, is he a good father to the children and does he provide well for you?" She only could answer those important questions positively, so the judge suggested that she go home and in the following 30 days to really think of the good things and see the good things in her husband. And then afterwards if she still thought she wanted to be divorced, she should come back again. The judge never saw her again!*

It's so often the little things which break up relationships. Who are you having a hard time with in your life? Why not try and focus on their good qualities and treat them as who they can become? You may be surprised as they rise to the occasion.

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1. **The Duty of Encouragement**



**Quote of the day:**

"One of the highest of human duties is the duty of encouragement. Many a time a word of praise or thanks or appreciation or cheer has kept a man on his feet. Blessed is the man who speaks such a word." —William Barclay.

**Consider:**

*When Sir Walter Scott was a boy he was considered a great dullard. His accustomed place in the schoolroom was the ignominious dunce corner, with the high-pointed paper cap of shame on his head. When about twelve or fourteen years old he happened to be in a house where some famous literary guests were being entertained. Robert Burns, the Scottish poet, was standing admiring a picture under which was written the couplet of a stanza. He inquired concerning the author. None seemed to know. Timidly a boy crept up to his side, named the author, and quoted the rest of the poem. Burns was surprised and delighted. Laying his hand on the boy's head, he exclaimed, 'Ah, Bairnie, ye will be a great man in Scotland some day.' From that day Walter Scott was a changed lad. One word of encouragement set him on the road to greatness.*

Reach out and encourage someone today, it just might change their life.

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1. **The Person Behind the Mask**

 

**Quote of the day:**

“The average person works at fifty percent or less of their potential. Your job is to unleash that extra fifty percent." — Brian Tracy

**Reflection:**

People often judge one another by what they see on the outside—the initial reactions, the perception of a person's character, the hearsay circulated about an individual. It's often difficult to see the person behind the mask, to see his/her heart and what their intentions are. It's sad that so much is measured by what's on the outside, because it's the heart that counts.

It takes love, hope, faith, and understanding to nourish the potential in another, and to believe that there is more to an individual than meets the eye.

You may think that you know a person well enough to label them as beyond changing, but would you have the same said of you? Would you want to be boxed in and limited to what people presume you are? Would you consider: how people view and treat you to be a fair representation of who you really are and how you would want to be treated? Think about that, and then consider: how you view others and how you treat them.

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1. **The Lion and the Mouse**

 

**Quote of the day:**

“No one is useless in this world who lightens the burden of it for anyone else.” — Charles Dickens

**Consider:**

This quote reminds me of an Aesop fable that goes something like this.

*A sleeping lion was awakened when a mouse ran across his head. The lion roared and grabbed the tiny creature by the tail. “Please forgive me,” begged the mouse. “I meant no harm and I certainly did not intend to disturb you. If you could find it in your heart to let me go, I will return the favor someday.” “I’m the king of the jungle and you’re just a little mouse,” the lion laughed. “What could you possibly do for me?” The lion looked at the frightened creature in his paw. “You would not be much of a meal anyway. I’ll let you go.”*

*The mouse thanked the lion and scurried away. A short while later, the mouse heard the distressed roar of the lion. Upon further investigation the mouse found the lion trapped in a hunter’s net. The lion struggled in vain to free himself, roaring in frustration. “Shhh,” the mouse cautioned. “If you continue to roar, the hunters will know that you are trapped and they will come here and take you away. Don’t worry, I will help you escape.” The mouse began to gnaw on the net. In a matter of minutes, he freed the lion!*

*The lion looked at the mouse in awe. “I never imagined that a creature so tiny and meek could ever be of use to me. Yet, you alone have set me free. Please forgive me for misjudging your worth.”*

How many times do we misjudge other’s worth?

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1. **Be a Love-Finder**

 

**Quote of the day:**

“Choose to be a love-finder rather than a fault-finder.” — Gerald Jampolsky

**Consider:**

*Alexander the Great, the world conqueror, wanted to have his portrait painted, and assigned the finest artist in the realm to the job. When the artist arrived in Alexander's court, he was told that the leader wanted a full-face pose. He was very sad, because Alexander's face was disfigured by a long, hideous scar on the right cheek—a memento from the battlefield.*

*The artist thought it over for awhile, then he discovered a way he could paint the portrait and at the same time hide the scar. He seated the leader at a table, placed his elbow on the table and asked Alexander to cup his chin in his hand. The artist then skillfully arranged Alexander's fingers in such a way that they hid the scar completely. And then he went on to paint a very beautiful and flawless portrait of his master.*

It is always best to minimize the weak points of others and emphasize their virtues. Is there anyone in your life you need to frame and look at in a different light?

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1. Admire and Appreciate Others

 

**Quote of the day:**

“Who is the happiest of men? He who values the merits of others, and in their pleasure takes joy, even as though 'twere his own.” — Johann von Goethe

**Reflection:**

It takes time to notice the merits of others. This reminds me of a story.

*Once a wise old botany teacher was speaking to a group of young and eager students. He gave them an assignment to go out by the side of some lonely road and find a small, unnoticed flower. He asked them to study the flower for a long time. "Get a magnifying glass and study the delicate veins in the leaves, and notice the nuances and shades of color. Turn the leaf slowly and observe its symmetry. And remember: this flower might have gone unnoticed and unappreciated if you had not found and admired it," he told his students.*

*When the class returned after carrying out the assignment, the wise teacher observed: "People are just like that unnoticed flower, too. Each one is different, carefully crafted, uniquely endowed. But you have to spend time with a person to realize this. So many people go unnoticed and unappreciated because no one has ever taken time with them and admired their uniqueness."*

Are you taking time to observe, admire and appreciate others? If so than you are a wise person. If not, why not start today.

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1. **All Are Significant**

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**Quote of the day:**

"No one who achieves success does so without acknowledging the help of others. The wise and confident acknowledge this help with gratitude. -- Alfred North Whitehead

**Reflection:**

Someone sent me this story and I thought it had a great lesson.

*During my second month of nursing school, our professor gave us a pop-quiz. I was a conscientious student and had breezed through the questions, until I read the last one: "What is the first name of the woman who cleans the school?" Surely this was some kind of joke. I had seen the cleaning woman several times. She was tall, dark-haired and in her 50s, but how would I know her name? I handed in my paper, leaving the last question blank. Before class ended, one student asked if the last question would count toward our quiz grade. "Absolutely," said the professor. "In your careers you will meet many people. All are significant. They deserve your attention and care, even if all you do is smile and say hello." I've never forgotten that lesson. I also learned her name was Dorothy.*

I think that’s a great story. The point being everyone is significant, even the seemly insignificant people, and deserve our attention and care. You never know when they will be the ones to help you.

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1. **Stop Looking For Imperfection**

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**Quote of the day**:

“If you look for perfection, you’ll never be content.” — Leo Tolstoy

**Reflection:**

Have you ever been frustrated by the imperfections of others and wished that things could just be perfect? Did you ever wonder why do things like personality clashes, carelessness, inconsideration, injustice, pessimism, and put-downs have to exist? These things are real, and they are wrong! I wish they did not exist. If everyone, myself included, could just get their act together, our lives could be one of blissful perfection. Perfection, I often reason, is the only thing that can ever relieve my irritations.

Boy, has my thinking been wrong. What we really need is more love and tolerance. As I ponder more about the lack of perfection in others as well as myself, I realize how much we’d be missing if I and everyone around me were perfect from the start. We’d miss the unpredictability of life that adds a sense of surprise; the joy of forgiving and being forgiven; the strong, abiding bonds of friendship that are formed through adversity, and positive character traits that are formed much the same way.

So, what to do? I have decided to stop looking for *perfection* as Mr. Tolstoy suggests. Adding negative thoughts to a negative situation never brings positive results. I have determined to look for, and find, positive opportunities and experiences in every situation, even those that are hidden behind a mask of imperfection. If we look beyond difficulties, losses, hurts, and lacks, in the day-to-day circumstances we encounter, our journey through life will be joyous and filled with surprise. Instead we can think of each imperfect experience as a clue in a treasure hunt, the door to a secret vault where we will find beautiful treasures.

Look for and list the hidden treasures in both people and situations that irritate you, and soon you will realize what a jewel they are.

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1. **Go Looking for Gold**



**Quote of the day:**

“The man of genius inspires us with a boundless confidence in our own powers.” — Ralph Waldo Emerson

**Reflection:**

*At one time Andrew Carnegie was the wealthiest man in America. He came from his native Scotland. When he was a small boy, he did a variety of odd jobs, and eventually ended up as the largest steel manufacturer in the United States (U.S. Steel). At one time he had forty-three millionaires working for him. In those days a millionaire was a rare person; conservatively speaking, a million dollars in those days would be equivalent to at least twenty million dollars today.*

*One day, a reporter asked Carnegie how it was that he had hired forty-three millionaires. Carnegie responded that the men had not been millionaires when they started working for him, but had become millionaires only as a result.*

*The reporter's next question was, "Well, how did you develop these men to become so valuable to you that you paid them that much money?" Carnegie replied that people are developed the same way gold is mined. When gold is mined, several tons of dirt and stone must be moved first to get an ounce of gold, but one doesn't go into the mine looking for dirt-one goes in looking for gold.*

That's exactly the way we should view people. Don't look for the flaws and imperfections. Look for the gold, not the dirt; the good, not the bad. Look for the positive aspects of life. Like everything else, the more good qualities we look for in people, the more we are going to find.

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1. **Making Others Happy**

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**Quote of the day:**

“Joy can be real only if people look upon their life as a service, and have a definite object in life outside themselves and their personal happiness.” — Leo Tolstoy

**Reflection:**

This quote reminds me of a Fairytale I once heard.

*A fairy visited this world in order to find out what type of people were really truly happy. She came to a large estate where very rich people lived. The grounds were perfectly manicured and laden with magnificent gardens. They had thorough-bred horses and posh cars, expensive paintings, and an array of luxuries almost beyond imagination. And yet they were not happy. In fact, the fairy found only one happy person in the entire great household, the servant boy who did all sorts of odd jobs. The boy was always found singing away from morning to night as he performed his chores. His wise mother had taught him that to be of use to others was the best and highest thing that anyone could do and in so doing, she had given him a priceless gift of greatness, for he knew how to make others happy.*

This is just a fairytale but the point is clear that when we make others happy, we in turn find true happiness. Are you happy? If not, the answer might be in this question: Are you pursuing your own gain only, or do you make an effort to be of help to others?