

S

ome Days . . . I Need a Hug!

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Life is a journey. Let us enjoy the ride. The information shared in this lesson is designed to guide individuals to become aware of the following:

- Life is what I make it.
- I (not someone or something else) am responsible for my happiness.
- The simple pleasures in life keep us going forward.

General Information

Scientists are finding that our feelings, thoughts, and attitudes play a role in our mental health and contribute to our physical well-being and ability to recover from illness. The only thing that we can control is our mental attitude. Our attitude is often what handicaps us. We can change our attitude when we can't change circumstances. We can't control all of the circumstances of our lives, but we can control our attitude toward them. Positive mental attitude means having the appropriate attitude under the circumstances.

Remember, life is give-and-take. We must take a little for ourselves, or soon we will be running on empty. We constantly must add to our storehouse of well-being or we will find it empty.

Activity: Share the following; then ask for other ideas from the group of ways to feel content.

Personal "To-Do" List

- To make pockets of time each day for the things or people I enjoy.
- To forget the mistakes of the past and press on to the greater achievements of the future.
- To wear a cheerful countenance at all times and give every living creature I meet a smile.
- To give so much time to the improvement of myself that I have no time to criticize others.
- To decide to be happy.
- To enjoy the pleasures of simple things.
- To slow down and really enjoy the things I like.
- To take care of my body, mind, and soul.
- To live each day to the fullest.
- To tell people what I need, and not expect them to read my mind.

Live Life to the Fullest

- **Develop a new interest.**
It's important to develop a vital, challenging interest you can enjoy. Learning should never end. Try new things; read new books or magazines.

➤ **Life is a full-time job.**

You alone are responsible for how your day turns out. Structuring your own time is a skill that has to be learned. That's particularly so if you've spent your life in a career that provided a lot of structure. So, find things you love to do, and learn to say no to anything else.

➤ **Become wise.**

You don't necessarily grow wise as you grow older. Wisdom comes from wrestling with experiences, making sense out of them... enjoying life's pleasures, letting go of sorrows and mistakes.

➤ **Explore your inner life.**

Young adulthood and middle age often don't leave us much time to explore the heart and spirit deeply. As the outer life shrinks, there's room for a great deal of inner growth for most people. Although we need the nourishment of other human beings of all ages in our lives, we also need quiet and solitude to explore the inner self.

➤ **Understand the value of life.**

The best way to get the most out of life is to come to terms with mortality. Life is like a hotel—everybody checks in and everybody checks out. Once you fully grasp this, you can truly savor each day.

➤ **Forget the myths.**

If we want a richer later life, we have to create a richer middle life. We must learn to appreciate and give thanks for the many gifts that life gives us.

Activity: Before the meeting, write out the following and either hang them up around the room or ask various members to be prepared to read:

“The people who find the most pleasure in life are the ones who have taken control of and shaped it to conform to their own wishes and values.”

“Success comes in cans. Failure comes in can'ts.”

“Shoot for the moon. Even if you miss it, you will land among the stars.”

“When you cease to make a contribution, you begin to die. I think it is a necessity to be doing something which you feel is helpful in order to grow old gracefully and contentedly.”

Eleanor Roosevelt

“Be just as enthusiastic about the success of others as you are about your own.”

“Love your neighbor—but don't pull down your hedge.”

Ben Franklin

“Happiness is good health and a bad memory.”

Ingrid Bergman

“A true friend never gets in your way unless you happen to be going down.”

Arnold Glasgow

Things to Do...Just for You!

- **Celebrate a job or task well done before moving on to the next.** Pat your thigh and say to yourself, “Yes I did it.”
- **Create a daily enjoyment affirmation.** Each morning upon awakening, but before getting out of bed, ask yourself, “How can I enjoy this day?” State a positive affirmation and think of something pleasant you can look forward to.
- **Count your blessings.** Hang a huge sheet of paper on the back of your bedroom or bathroom door. Keep an ongoing, visible list of your day-to-day blessings.
- **Relax your standards.** The world will not end if the house doesn't get vacuumed this week.
- **Do nothing you have to lie about later.**
- **Take your power back.** Think of a problem in your life and imagine you alone have created it.

Then ask yourself, "How did I do it? How has it worsened? What can I do today to solve it?"

- **Be still.** Find a quiet place to sit peacefully and listen to what's going on inside you. Feel your body, release the tension, breathe deeply, and let your imagination fly.
- **Say "No!"** Saying no to extra projects, social activities and invitations you know you don't have the time or energy for takes practice, self-respect, and a belief that everyone, every day, needs quiet time to relax and to be alone.
- **Always set up "just in case" plans.** ("If for some reason either of us is delayed, here's what we'll do..." Or, "If we get split up in the shopping center, here's where we'll meet.")
- **Plan ahead.** Don't let the gas tank get below one-quarter full; keep a well-stocked "emergency shelf" of home staples; don't wait until you're down to your last postage stamp to buy more; etc.
- **Unplug your phone.** Want to take a long bath, meditate, sleep, or read without interruption? Drum up the courage to temporarily disconnect. (The possibility of there being a terrible emergency in the next hour or so is almost nil.)

The benefits of nurturing yourself are great. You'll enjoy being with yourself. You'll be able to establish and maintain healthy relationships. You'll find handling everyday ups and downs will be easier. And you'll want to take care of your spiritual and emotional needs as well. *You're a special person.*

Remember to:

1. get to know yourself;
2. accept yourself today, just as you are;
3. accept "conditions" life has offered you and make the best of them; and
4. show yourself that you care about you.

Take Time to...

- Work** it is the price of success
 - Think** it is the source of power
 - Play** it is the secret of youth
 - Read** it is the foundation of knowledge
 - Love** it is the one sacrament of life
 - Dream** it hitches the soul to the stars
 - Plan** it is the secret of being able to have time for the first six things
- ...*Author Unknown*

You Tell on Yourself

You tell on yourself by the friends you seek,
By the very manner in which you speak,

By the way you employ your leisure time,
By the use you make of dollar and dime.

You tell what you are by the things you wear,
By the spirit in which your burdens you bear,
By the type of things at which you laugh,
By the records you play on your phonograph.

You tell what you are by the way you walk,
By the things of which you delight to talk,

By the manner in which you can bear defeat,

By so simple a thing as how much you eat.
By the books you choose from the well-filled
shelf;
In these ways, and more, you tell on yourself;
So there really isn't a particle of sense
In making an effort to keep up a false pretense.

Activity:

Close with the following.

Slow down and enjoy life! Here are some ideas:

- Remember what peace there may be in silence.
- Go to bed early; get up early.
- Meditate; find some quiet time.
- Take a quiet walk in the country, at the ocean, or along a river or a creek.
- Make something from scratch—cook, sew, build, garden; be creative.
- Take long, relaxing baths with bubbles and beautiful soaps.
- Read some good books.
- Express yourself.
- Write or call our elected officials.
- Go to the movies or watch movies. Be entertained.
- Write in a journal.
- Do a kindness. In fact, practice kindness.
- Surprise someone with a special note or gift.

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