

# Happy New Year

As we end another year of our lives here on this earth, and get ready to begin a new year, I focus on what brings me the most happiness. It seems to get back to that simple prayer I say each night – “God, please keep my family safe and healthy and close to one another and keep me on the path of using my talents in the best way possible.”

I haven't always felt that way. But I am a believer that there's a God who doesn't do the work for us, but who's there to guide us, if we're willing to ask for help when we need it, and choose to take the better path. And I'm a believer that repetition of the positive will overcome the negative. For years, I've had a small plaque over my kitchen sink that reads “Forgiveness is the secret of souls at peace”. And I had a plaque on my office desk that read “Never Quit...Never Give Up” (the famous words of Sir Winston Churchill when London was being bombed in WWII). It helped me through many a difficult day.

One of the hardest lessons in life, for me, was learning to forgive myself for my own transgressions, and for the hurt I had caused others, most especially my immediate family – recognizing I could not change the past, but I could change the direction of the future. Once I forgave myself, it became easier to forgive others.

I learned that **Forgiveness** is a function of love that seeks to understand the negative impact of another person, then release the pain and find inner peace. When you choose to forgive somebody, this does not mean you acknowledge their behavior as acceptable, and it does not mean we assume a holier than thou attitude over others.

Forgiveness is letting go of the pain and accepting what has happened, because it will not change. Forgiveness allows us to save ourselves from having to go through long years of resentment, feeling anger, living a life full of stress for not being able to let go of something that has hurt us deeply. Recognizing it is essential to forgive in order to have peace of mind, to be able to enjoy life with the emotional health so vital for our well-being.

Forgiveness does not imply weakness or passivity, nor denial of what has happened. Forgiveness is managing our inner life while healing the traumatic memories inside, by taking action outside. Forgiveness is a powerful healer, soothing and quieting unhealthy emotions. When we forgive, we gain strength, courage, compassion, and joy, our relationships improve, and we become more skillful at solving our problems.

It takes time, thus we must work on being patience. **Patience** is the state of endurance under difficult circumstances, which can mean persevering in the face of provocation without becoming annoyed or upset; or exhibiting self-control when under strain, especially when faced with longer-term difficulties. It is the trait of being steadfast. Others will most probably not be at the same point on the path, thus we need to be tolerant of their impatience, knowing they may still doubt our sincerity, and are not yet willing to lower that invisible shield we all put up when we feel we can no longer tolerate the pain.

Patience is a virtue because it makes us better people. The definition of the word is to tolerate delay. This implies self control. How many times have we jumped the gun and found out it would have been better to tolerate delay or had self control? Did we hurt someone we love because of lack of patience? Having patience will heal the wounds. Patience is not only a virtue but a necessity for a happy existence. To become silent means to emerge wisdom from within, it empowers and refreshes the soul. Patience honors the appreciation that, whatever the daily struggle, the reward is finding joy in each day. – pg 1

As parents we want to protect our children and our animals. We want better for our children than what we have had. It's an instinct to protect our young. However, if our children never have the opportunity to experience pain under our supportive care, with us to teach them how to manage the emotions and conflicts that come along with it, they may find it more difficult to manage as adults. Part of our job as parents is to allow our children to experience their feelings and be there for support. Unconditional love does not mean shielding kids from pain. Unconditional love is part of teaching resilience, helping kids to bounce back from challenging situations. When we allow our children to feel their pain and use these opportunities to support them, we teach them how to manage conflict, and help them manage challenging emotions, preparing them for adulthood.

Which brings me to another trait important in living a worthwhile life, **Perseverance**. Through doubting times, I surrounded myself with quotes that helped me grow and achieve:

"Never give up. Never, never give up! Never give in, never, never, never, in nothing great or small, except to convictions of honour and good sense". ~ Winston S. Churchill

"It's not that I'm so smart, it's just that I stay with problems longer." ~ Albert Einstein

"The difference between what we do and what we are capable of doing would suffice to solve most of the world's problems." ~ Mahatma Gandhi

"If we are facing in the right direction, all we have to do is keep on walking." ~ Buddha

"When you get into a tight place and everything goes against you, till it seems as though you could not hang on a minute longer, never give up then, for that is just the place and time that the tide will turn." ~ Harriet Beecher Stowe

"Do it now. You become successful the moment you start moving toward a worthwhile goal". ~ Unknown

"Nobody can make you feel inferior without your permission". ~ Eleanor Roosevelt

"Life is not easy for any of us. But what of that? We must have perseverance and above all confidence in ourselves. We must believe that we are gifted for something, and that this thing, at whatever cost, must be attained." ~ Marie Curie

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that frightens us most. We ask ourselves, 'Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and famous?' Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that people won't feel insecure around you. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in all of us. And when we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others." - Used by Nelson Mandela in his 1994 inaugural speech

At my Rotary District Governor's year end banquet, a dear female friend gave me a plaque which sits on my office window sill: "**she** was ARMED with intuition and the fearless **courage** to ACT". While I have failed at some significant things in my life, and have achieved success at many more, my greatest achievement always has been, and will continue to be, the family I was privileged to be the mother and grandmother of, and the extended family who contributes to our circle of life. Thank you for caring, and for being willing to share a part of your life and your love with me.

If the end was near, who would you want around you? As we approach this new year of our lives, when the world at times seems insecure & unpredictable I close with a heart full of love and a quote: "We will open the book. Its pages are blank. We will put words on them ourselves. The book is called Opportunity. Its first chapter is New Year's Day". ~ Edith Pierce

Love ~ Always ~ Mom/Grammy Brown/Marlene – December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2009 - pg. 2



"In the midst of winter, I found in me an invincible summer" – Robert Frost