



# learning for life

embracing core values

## your details

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## favourite quotations

"Genius is eternal patience" – Michelangelo. Michelangelo explains how being patient is the secret of success.

"Do you want to be a positive influence in the world? First get your own life in order. Ground yourself in the universal principle so that your behaviour is wholesome and effective. If you do that, you will earn respect and be a powerful influence" – Lao Tzu. Lao Tzu shows us that to make a positive effect on the world and to earn respect, we must strive to be good people.

"Never regard study as a duty, but as the enviable opportunity to learn to know the liberating influence of beauty in the realm of the spirit for your own personal joy and to the profit of the community to which your later work belongs" – Albert Einstein. Albert Einstein conveys his idea on education that it is an amazing thing rather than a chore.

"To be truly ignorant, be content with your own knowledge" – Chuang Tzu. Chang Tzu says that you are an ignorant person if you give up the lust to learn new things, and are happy with the knowledge you have.

## favourite stories

**The Boy and the Nettle**  
 A boy was stung by a nettle. He ran home to his mother crying, 'although it hurts me very much, I only touched it gently.' His wise mother said, 'that's why it stung you.' The boy listened through the searing pain in his hand. 'Next time, grasp the nettle with all your might, and it will be as soft as silk in your hand and will not hurt you.' So the boy learned that whatever he did, he should do it with all his might.

This story is from the famous Aesop and his Fables. It teaches us always to do what we want to do with all our might, and to persevere. Only then will we succeed.

An example of this idea is given by Samuel Johnson, the famous poet, critic and writer. He said that 'Great works are not performed by strength, but by perseverance.' This quote is exemplified in the story. Those who persevere will achieve great things.

## 01 personal development

- positive outlook
- gratitude
- love
- enthusiasm
- happiness/joy
- ✓ perseverance
- generosity
- honesty/integrity
- humility/modesty
- wisdom

### your choice:

It is an accepted fact in modern day society that if we work hard, we will succeed on our desired path, whatever that may be. For instance, when sitting exams, the student who is dedicated to revision is the most likely student to achieve satisfactory scores. The student, however, who gives very little attention or indeed doesn't revise is not as likely to do well. It's a cruel fact, a callous move by mother nature, perhaps, but it's true. The hard workers will survive, whereas less motivated people will, ironically, have to put more work in at the end of the day.

The ant is the perfect example of perseverance. They work hard at gathering food for the good of the colony, not for their own benefit. The very best model of food is gathered. There is nothing extraordinary in this (it would seem). Admittedly, they work hard, but any person could do exactly that with say, homework or sports. Surely it isn't much of a feat? Well, this is not the wonder of what they do. Think how many knock-knocks one ant must suffer in order to achieve its goals. The threat of predators, the numerous environmental challenges. They persevere no matter what. This is where we can learn. The only ant's perseverance is a lesson to us all, one which will most likely prove extremely useful in the long road of life.

## 02 success living

- creative thinking
- ✓ learning
- focus
- work
- ideals
- purpose
- courage
- friendship
- confidence
- self-discipline

### your choice:

Successful living is not merely the study of atoms, it is not merely the research of the evolutionary process. It is, in itself, a philosophy. The first scientists in Ancient Greece demonstrated this idea perfectly, as they themselves conducted all scientific procedures by thinking about them. It was a way of thinking – a way of life. Most of these views, however, were later proved wrong, but if they shared anything with present day scientists, I am sure they would be delighted to find this out. You see the chance to learn something utterly new delights every scientist.

This ethic isn't merely reserved for people in science. Quite the reverse, this ethic could teach everybody. The more curiosity you have, the more you will learn. The more you learn, the more you will want to learn more. If we can all maintain a lust for learning, we will not only succeed in what we want to do, but also develop a passion for it, and, therefore, be more persevered.

## 03 turning things around

- problem → solutions
- potential → actual
- loss → gain
- pessimism → optimism
- worry → moving on
- ✓ mistakes → learning
- anger → calm
- put it off → do it now
- fear → fearlessness
- stress → stillness

### your choice:

I wonder how many of us can remember learning to ride a bike. The first, tentative steps towards a brand new bike are perhaps the scariest steps a young child can take. They are stepping out of the infant 'safety zone' where mistakes are ignored and seldom happen anyway. For the first, say, hour they will most likely repeatedly fall off, will not be able to ride at all! They will have tasted the sour grapes of failure. However, every time they fall, they will be wiser afterwards, knowing what not to do to prevent the incident happening again. Eventually, they will have learned from a particular fall and will be able to ride. This is one of many examples of learning from our mistakes. As Albert Einstein once said, 'Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new.' If we follow this principle of embracing mistakes and learning from them, our lives will be more fruitful.

## 04 personal relationships

- co-operation
- responsibility
- empathy
- trust
- kindness
- forgiveness
- ✓ respect
- volunteering/service
- listening
- openness

### your choice:

In social situations, it is vital that you respect the people you are with. This is an unspoken rule, and if followed, should lead to a happy and long-lasting relationship. For instance, if somebody you are bonding with has a particular taboo, it would be respectful not to breach this. When working with other people on a project at school, it is vital to respect their views and opinions, whether you agree with them or not. For this, your peers will respect you and will try to take on board what you're saying. Thus, the task will be accomplished with greater success.

## inspirational figures

"Personally, I rather look forward to a computer program winning the world chess championship. Humanity needs a lesson in humility" – Richard Dawkins.

Needless to say, the world of science is a somewhat capricious one. (As mentioned previously), theories are constantly being proven wrong. The people who put them forward (aside from being academically humiliated) will be forgotten, becoming mere fragments of scientific history. Not many scientists have been able to hold their reputation high for all that long. There is one evolutionary biologist, however, who has managed to keep his head above water for over 20 years. His name is Richard Dawkins.

Richard Dawkins has been a prolific contributor to the field of evolutionary biology, and has been on the main scene for a long time. Recently he drew in a new audience with his controversial book "The God Delusion". In it he questions, and criticises religion. The book has sparked anger from the religious community, and pride in the non-religious. I admire him for his raw audacity, out-spoken manner and pure perseverance in character. If he had given up when countless people expressed their hatred for him, would he be the prominent figure he is today? I think not. If I could have the hard working nature and sparking courage of Richard Dawkins, I would be able to accomplish a lot more.

Richard was raised an Anglican, but broke away from his faith at a young age. He attended several boarding schools, and went on to study Natural Sciences and Biology at Oxford University, and debuted with his book "The Selfish Gene". Today Richard focuses on the issue of religion, and his views on this were expressed in the "The God Delusion", his most recent book.

He has somewhat of a "cult" following of atheists, agnostics and even religious people who have all been affected in some way by his writing. I had the pleasure of attending one of his lectures some time in 2006, and I have to say it was one of the most stirring lectures (the only lecture) I have ever seen. He literally reached out and grabbed the whole audience with his wit, whimsy and sparking intelligence. It was thoroughly moving, and caused me to begin to treat him as my role model.

My science teacher, Mr Firth, shares my admiration for this extraordinary man. Mr Firth is an atheist, and I believe, as with many of the other atheists in the world, he takes a certain amount of inspiration from Mr Dawkins. I can certainly say I do. His work has completely changed the way many, many people think about evolution, religion even the universe we live in. The effects of his writing and speeches have altered what happens in laboratories all over the world. The mere mention of his name is enough to send some very respectable members of society into passionate discussions of views. Is that not simply ... inspirational?

## personal reflection

**Life is an adventure**  
 Life is something that philosophers, scientists, theologians and normal people like you and me will never quite figure out. It's a crazy rollercoaster ride through the unexpected, with every twist and turn marking a new chapter in our development. I myself am on the steps of becoming a teenager, which means of starting a fresh section of my time alive. In order to succeed in the challenges presented by my teenage years, I will need to persevere, move on from my mistakes and respect those around me, as well as a whole host of other vital qualities.

I will need to stay focused on my schoolwork. My awareness of what is important will have to become more acute. All these things, and more, are totally necessary in any part of your life. If Van Gogh hadn't managed through his depression, would we have had the beautiful paintings we have today? If Shakespeare hadn't had the commitment to his work, would the world have seen the likes of Hamlet or Romeo and Juliet? Would the planet we live on be the same if all of the people who live on it and have ever lived on it didn't know how to live a successful life? I doubt it. A quote for A. Powell Davies finally illustrates this point. He said that, 'life is just a chance to grow a soul.' What he means is the point of life is to see how you can really flourish, how you can improve the world. Otherwise, what would be the point in it all?

Well, many people argue that if you live a good life you will go to some sort of paradise, whether it is the Christian heaven, or the Muslim paradise. I do not believe this, because I am an atheist. But I am in no position to question this theory. For all I know, for all to my inspirational figure Richard Dawkins knows, there might be somewhere you go after you die. If so, well, I look forward to a relaxing eternity in heaven! We really know nothing at all about this funny old life of ours. That's the beauty of it! We know nothing about how our mind functions, or where we go after we die, but still we strive to live rich, full lives. And that is a quality better than any money or success. For if we enjoy our lives, and feel that we have achieved our goals, we have reached what members of the Buddhist tradition call Nirvana. True happiness through enlightenment and goodness of soul. There may or may not be such a thing as a 'soul' or indeed 'Nirvana.' But if we achieve the goals we set ourselves, what is to stop us being enlightened and happy? Nothing. And that's the point I have been trying to make from the start. If we follow our own morals, or the morals of faith, then we will truly succeed in what we choose to do – that's what I call enlightenment.

Our goal is to help individuals build a firm foundation of lifelong practical wisdom



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