

The Wisdom of Winnie the Pooh

Wisdom comes to us from many sources—sometimes from the mouths of babes, at other times from the teachings of ancient philosophers. Some delightful and timeless guidelines for living were given to us by A. A. Milne, the London playwright who wrote the charming tale of *Winnie-the-Pooh* in 1926, and several more books on "Pooh Bear" to follow.

Although originally written as stories to read to his young son, Christopher Robin, Milne's series on Winnie and his friends who lived in the forest offer adults suggestions for living connected, harmonious and balanced lives—especially important in this hectic, modern world in which we live.

Each character's personality reflects for the reader a unique approach to life: Owl through his quest for knowledge. Eeyore as an unrelenting pessimist. We learn about bravery from Piglet and the need to believe in ourselves from Tigger. Winnie the Pooh, as described by Milne, might be a bear with "very little brain," but he has an abundance of wisdom and spouts insightful truths. Here are some:

On believing in yourself:

"Promise me you'll always remember: You're BRAVER than you believe; and STRONGER than you seem; and SMARTER than you think."

Self-esteem is developed by knowing and "remembering" that you are greater than the thoughts and beliefs that try to convince you that you cannot be and do what you wish. When you follow your dreams, which arise from your authentic self, you can be all that you choose to be.

On living with gratitude:

"What day is it?"

"It's today," squeaked Piglet.

"My favorite day," said Pooh.

How would it be if you lived your life as if *today* is—or at least *could* be—the best day of all, living each and every day as if it was your favorite day and being thankful for it?

Try starting each morning with the thought, "This is going to be my best day ever." Then stay aware of all the things that make this a beautiful day in your life.

On taking time:

"Don't underestimate the value of doing nothing, of just going along, listening to all the things you can't hear and not bothering."

In these fast-moving times, take time to slow down and try "doing nothing" with awareness. You might want to just sit and notice *who* and *how* you are right now, stare at a candle flame, listen to music....

On love:

"How do you spell 'love?'" asks Piglet. Pooh responds, "You don't spell it. You feel it."

And you *live* it. You live it through giving your time and attention to the people and activities that are important to you. Who or what have you been neglecting?

On friendship:

"It's more fun to talk with someone who doesn't use long, difficult words but rather short, easy words like 'What about lunch?'"

Have lunch with someone you care about this week. Giving time to our friendships, to conversation and laughter, nourishes us and helps keep our lives in balance.

On mindfulness:

"Rivers know this: There is no hurry. We shall get there some day."

Practice staying present with whatever is flowing through your life on a daily, moment-by-moment basis. Enjoy being where you ARE. ✱

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Behaviors that Block Happiness

We all seek that elusive quality of "happiness." But does your behavior sabotage your chances of finding it? Here are some things you can stop doing so you can be happier.

- 1. Impressing.** What you *have* — your possessions, your accomplishments—don't result in real relationship or lasting happiness.
- 2. Blaming.** Your response to any situation is your choice. Try making it a learning opportunity—taking responsibility is empowering.
- 3. Controlling.** It doesn't help you feel good about yourself. Honor your boundaries, but make space for others' needs and choices, too.
- 4. Criticizing.** We are all unique and different, not better or worse. Appreciate the differences instead of zeroing in on shortcomings.
- 5. Whining.** Complaining is ineffective, whereas asking for what you want is liberating.
- 6. Clinging to what is known.** When you're feeling afraid or insecure, be willing to let go of the familiar, take a risk and do something new.
- 7. Being ungrateful.** Stay aware of all the gifts and blessings that you *do* have. Express your gratitude and happiness will follow.
- 8. Preaching.** Another form of judging. Find more fun and empowering ways to share your knowledge.
- 9. Negative self-talk.** Train yourself to notice your mind's chatter. Working towards changing negative thoughts to positive ones will transform your life.
- 10. Being fearful.** Whatever you've been dreaming, get going on it. "Feel the fear and do it anyway." ✱

A Letter From

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Happiness may be your primary goal in life—as it should be. After all, we are only truly happy when we are living balanced, caring, meaningful lives.

No one’s destiny is a miserable, unsatisfied life. And there is no one who does not have the birthright to choose happiness. You want it? You deserve it.

But do you know how to create and sustain happiness? Do you know what habits or behaviors get in the way of you being happy?

This issue takes a look at nurturing happiness from several perspectives, starting on page 1 with simple tips for a happy life, through the wise words of that literary bear, Winnie the Pooh.

Nothing gives us more happiness, usually, than the birth of a child. Page 3 offers tips on how to keep your partnership alive and happy after the kids arrive.

The Top 10 column offers ways in which you may be sabotaging your search for happiness, while the quiz takes a look at a sure hindrance to joy: bullying. The back page article suggests a tech detox as a means of staying connected.

May you find here some small, but meaningful, steps to take towards your happiness. For more information or to receive additional copies, please do not hesitate to call.

May you, in the words of Pooh, “think it over, think it under.” And have a happy spring.

Are You Being Bullied?

These days, bullying in schools and even in cyberspace is a hot topic. However, adult bullying is more widespread than you might think. It takes place in the home, the community and the workplace. According to Beth Rosenthal’s book *Bullying*, a 2007 poll found that one-third of workers, or 54 million Americans, reported workplace bullying.



Even when bullying is not physical, as in the case of domestic violence, the verbal and psychological abuse—while leaving no physical scars—nevertheless creates long-lasting effects, such as stress, depression, shame and low self-esteem. Harmful health effects can include insomnia, high blood pressure and digestive problems. Take this quiz to determine if you—or someone you know—might be the victim of bullying:

True False

- 1. My spouse repeatedly insults me in front of our friends and then tells me, laughing, that I’m too “thin-skinned.”
- 2. A woman on my volunteer committee puts down any ideas I put forth, cuts me off when I’m talking, and makes sarcastic remarks at my expense.
- 3. My partner is jealous and hostile when I spend time with my friends.
- 4. My boss takes credit for my ideas and then threatens to demote or fire me.
- 5. My neighbor shouts and makes threatening comments when I do the slightest thing that he doesn’t like.
- 6. My spouse controls all our finances; I have to ask every time I need money for even our most basic expenses.
- 7. My significant other constantly denies what he said just days or even hours ago and then acts like I’m losing my mind.
- 8. My boss assigns tasks with impossible deadlines and berates me in front of my co-workers.
- 9. My father is charming and kind when people from outside the family are around, but when alone with me he is manipulative and mean.
- 10. My partner threatens to leave and implies she will harm herself (or me) if I don’t go along with what she wants.
- 11. My mother criticizes how I look and what I wear whenever I see her.
- 12. My sibling is always trying to stir up trouble by lying about me and setting me up against other family members.
- 13. My co-worker finds ways to sabotage my position in the company including spreading nasty rumors about me.

If you answered true to some of these statements, you may be the victim of a bully. Please don’t hesitate to call if you would like support in dealing with this issue. *

Tending Your Marriage After the Kids Arrive

Starting a family is exciting. However, no one is prepared for all the changes that come with adding children into the mix. Your relationship is going to be tested as you figure out what “normal” means now. It can seem impossible to invest attention and energy into your marriage. However, with just a bit of effort, the two of you can become even closer.

What Do You Expect from You?

The reality of not enough sleep can leave you feeling that you will snap if even one more thing has to be done! Before the baby (or two or three), things like having a tidy house or baking cookies for a social event may have been something you took for granted. Give yourself permission to say “No” to those things. Be kind to yourself.

It isn't only the expectations you put on yourself that you need to consider. Your spouse is going through as much change as you are, as you each try to figure out what it means to be a parent. Common areas of conflict include:

- Household chores—“Where did all the laundry come from?”
- Parenting styles—“But my mother always said...”
- Caring for the baby—“It's your turn to get up.”
- Getting time away—“If I don't get out of this house...”
- Feeling neglected—“The baby gets all your attention.”



When there are disagreements and unmet expectations, talk them through. It's time for the two of you to define how your family will work and how the chores will be divided.

What Can Be Done to Stay Close?

Do all that you can to make each other feel special and appreciated. It can help to think back to what you did when you were first falling in love. Things like little love notes, simple gifts like a flower from the garden, sincere appreciation for completing household chores, or just snuggling can help both of you stay close and connected.

Even the smallest expressions of love can help you remember all the things about each other that you cherish and appreciate.

Commit to time for the two of you. Try to spend at least 15 minutes each day doing something together. It is easiest to find time when your little one is asleep. Turn off the television and pay attention to each other. Share a song, a shower, a funny story, hold hands, cuddle, talk a bit about what is going on or do any other activity that helps you feel closer to one another.



Take time off. Parenting is just like any job: people need time off to avoid burn out. This can be anything from one parent caring for the children while the other takes a soak in the tub to a guy's or girl's night out with friends. By taking turns, you can both get some quality breaks while knowing that your little ones are in good hands. This will allow you to return to the work of parenting feeling refreshed.

Plan for a regular date night. It is important to have some grown-up time without the kids. This is when having a good support system is important. Quality childcare can be provided by family members, by trading off with other couples, or by people you know and trust in your community. Then enjoy your free time, feeling confident that your children are in good hands.

Treat your time together as special. Take an extra few minutes with your appearance, set aside any worries and simply have fun. Laughing together can be especially beneficial if you've been feeling pretty serious lately. Even an old standby like dinner and a movie can be special. Most importantly—don't let the kids and domestic issues be the only things you talk about.



It may seem like a lot of work, but investing effort in your relationship will reinforce your foundation and allow you to keep working together as loving partners and parents. ✨

Take a Tech Detox

For one day a year each March, members from the nonprofit organization "Reboot" urge people to join them in observing the National Day of Unplugging.

From sundown to sundown during this 24-hour period, participants take a tech detox—a time-out from using anything that connects people to the electronic world. Thus, all devices such as computers, cell phones, laptops, iPods, tablets and Kindles are taboo, as are email and social media.

Today's world is so hectic for many of us that taking a short break from technology and its related paraphernalia makes good sense and can be therapeutic.

Being constantly connected in cyberspace, for instance, can become highly addictive. According to webMD.com, "An AOL study found that 59 percent of PDA users check their inboxes every time a message arrives."

So why not give the tech timeout a try for just one day? If you start feeling withdrawal symptoms from just thinking about not accessing any of your technological gadgetry, here

are the 10 simple principles of the annual celebration:

1. Avoid technology.
2. Connect with loved ones.
3. Nurture your health.
4. Get outside.
5. Avoid commerce.
6. Light candles.
7. Drink a glass of wine.
8. Eat bread.
9. Find silence.
10. Give back.

As a participant of the National Day of Unplugging, you can customize the time off to suit your own needs and lifestyle. For instance, if candles and wine are not to your liking, consider a yoga class, meditation, taking a hike or a nap. It's a great opportunity to engage in face-to-face connections with neighbors, friends or family.

It seems that the more plugged in we become to the electronic world, the less we engage in real-life

encounters with loved ones—and ourselves.

Clinical psychologist and author Dr. Craig Malkin, instructor of psychology for Harvard Medical School, says that technology actually makes some people afraid of intimacy. He refers to these folks as "the cybercelibate"—people who, he says, "shut out not only friendship,

but even romance and physical intimacy, in favor of the rush that comes with online connection and gaming thrills."

Unplugging for just one day will slow down the pace of your life and help you feel connected to those things that nourish your health

and well-being.

To pledge your vow of gadgetry abstinence or for more information, visit www.sabbathmanifesto.org.

Or just choose your own day to disconnect from technology and reconnect with people, nature—and yourself. *



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