

LIFE'S LESSONS AND INSIGHTS (AN ETHICAL WILL)



In writing the story of my life, it comes to me that I have learned many lessons, which I would like to write down in the hope that my children, grandchildren and perhaps their children may be interested to know about, and perhaps adopt into their life. This could be regarded as an “ethical will”, not a financial passing along of my money and property, but rather other values, assets and ways of living which have helped me through life and have residual value that they may use.

I'll just list them at random, without any attempt to rank them in importance.

I believe that life is a pure gift. Treasure it, savor it, value others whose life is also a gift. Enjoy its pleasures, hard times, love its quirks, weirdness, happiness, sadness, ordinariness, and wallow in just living it.

It makes sense to be as honest as possible. By doing so, without pomposity it becomes a way of life. Somehow others see it vaguely, and they want to give you their trust in many large and small ways. They may ask you to help with something, they may ask you to take on an important responsibility, such as being an executor of their will. They may ask for your opinion about things. They may simply regard you as a reliable friend. Most important, you will respect yourself and know you're doing the right thing in your life's many aspects and activities.

Use resources in a way that reflect your personal values. For example, if you value education, be involved in education, either for yourself or for others. Spend time and money to enhance and promote those values. If you love someone, spend time and money with and for that someone. If you believe in a cause or activity use your precious time and money for it.

Forgiveness is a major, major quality to develop and seek in others. In my experience, nothing is more important to the success of a marriage or to mutual relationships with others than mutual forgiveness. We all have imperfections that need to be forgiven. These imperfections are a part of the whole package of who we are as a person, so loving the whole package includes accepting (if not exactly loving) the imperfections.

Try to avoid being judgmental of others. Search and hunt for the good qualities in others. Assume you can trust others, unless there is some indication to the contrary.

It's good to work hard not only to please others, but also to know within yourself that you are giving your best. In my experience hard work is eventually recognized and rewarded. The reward may not necessarily be money or admiration. It may be increased responsibility, increased challenges or exciting opportunities offered.

Work for peace in the world. This would include local action, reducing poverty, opposing militarism, materialism and alleviating conditions that build anger and resentment among people.

I've learned that everyone grieves in their own way, so try to avoid passing judgment if someone doesn't seem to be grieving properly or long enough or doing it your way. I'll never forget a mystical moment when Lisa died. We went to the hospital right afterward to be with her. As I cried, observing her body, I heard her clear voice saying: “Go on Dad.” It has helped me ever since to “go on” with my life, difficult as it is, after a loved one dies. So I say the same to each of you! “Go on with your life.” Most of all, love one another and yourself.