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When a Loved One Dies.

When I think of my experiences in the Army, as both an enlisted person, and as an officer, I am forced to realize what an honor it was to have the chance to serve my country. Like many things, when we are in the middle of them, we are focused on the task at hand. Only in the light of time and perspective do we begin to understand what we were part of, and what that meant. My Army experiences inform my reality, and provide a framework for my current career. They also engender humility toward those who served with me, and were under my command. When I left active duty, it was as if something inside of me had died; a friend, a companion, a bulwark of my soul.

Shortly after I left active duty, my father died. Double-whammy. I often asked myself how these two traumas could come at the same time. Aside from the impact on all of us, to me, it seemed exponentially unfair. At the time I was looking forward to coming home and spending more time

.When a Loved One Dies (cont)

with my father, he was unmercifully taken from us.

A loved one dying is always traumatic. In this case it was also mystifying. The mix of emotions were softened by the fact my parents were practical people. Neither my mother nor my siblings had to suffer through a lack of planning or foresight on my parents' part.

In short, all of us were free to grieve, and seek Gods' counsel. We were not burdened by anxiety, fear, or chaos. Our parents took their stewardship of their lives seriously. This example transcends the self-adoration of popular culture. Their example destroyed fear, anxiety, and despair.

As I say to many people; there are things adults do. One of them is to prepare for when a loved one dies. Preparation and clarity are gifts we give to our loved ones. This is something I have personal knowledge about, and am anxious to share it.

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"Life, in all its uniqueness, would not be life without the negatives and the positives. That is why it is important to be a serious student of both."

-- Jim Rohn

"The country clubs, the cars, the boats, your assets may be ample, but the best inheritance you can leave your kids is to be a good example."

College Funding #1

In addition to tax credits and deductions, the federal government provides several tax incentives designed to assist families who are saving for, or already paying, higher education costs.

These include: **Qualified Tuition Programs (Section 529 Plans):** A qualified tuition program is a tax-advantaged investment plan operated by a state (or a state agency) to help families save for future college education costs.

□ The maximum amount that can be contributed to a qualified state tuition program varies from state to state, but can be substantial.

□ While contributions to a Section 529 plan are not deductible for federal income tax purposes, some states allow residents to deduct contributions from state tax returns.

□ Earnings on contributions to a Section 529 plan grow tax-free for as long as the money remains in the plan, which can produce substantially higher accumulations when compared to a college savings plan whose earnings are taxed each year.

□ Finally, when it comes time to pay for college, distributions used to pay for qualified education expenses are entirely free from federal income tax. **Education Savings Accounts:** Single taxpayers with adjusted gross income of up to \$95,000 or married couples filing jointly with adjusted gross income up to \$190,000 may contribute up to \$2,000 per beneficiary (generally a child under age 18) per year to an Education Savings Account. The age 18 restriction is eliminated in cases where a beneficiary has "special needs."

□ Contributions for the tax year may be made by April 15 of the following year.

□ The contribution amount is gradually reduced to zero for adjusted gross income levels between \$95,000 and \$110,000 for single taxpayers, and between \$190,000 and \$220,000 for married couples.

□ Contributions are not deductible, but earnings grow tax-deferred.

□ Distributions from an Education Savings Account are not included in gross income to the extent that the distribution does not exceed the qualified education expenses incurred by the beneficiary during the year in which the distribution is made. Qualified education expenses for which non-taxable withdrawals can be used include expenses for qualified elementary and secondary schools (grades K-12; public, private or religious), in addition to the expenses of higher education. Qualified education expenses include tutoring, room and board, uniforms, computers and extended day program costs.

□ The AOTC or Lifetime Learning Credit are coordinated with the tax exclusion for Education Savings Account distributions, meaning both can be used in the same year, so long as the credit and the exclusion cover different expenses.

Withdrawals from IRAs: Amounts can be withdrawn penalty-tax-free from an IRA for the higher education expenses of the taxpayer and the taxpayer's spouse, child and grandchild. Income tax, however, may be payable on all or a portion of the distribution.

"The wise man in the storm prays to God, not for safety from danger, but for the deliverance from fear. It is the storm within that endangers him, not the storm without."

-- Ralph Waldo Emerson

LOVE THE OPPORTUNITY

by Jim Rohn

Somebody said you have to love what you do, but that's not necessarily true. What is true is that you have to love the opportunity. The opportunity to build life, future, health, success and fortune. Knocking on someone's door may not be something you love to do, but you love the opportunity of what might be behind that door. For example, a guy says, "I'm digging ditches. Should I love digging ditches?" The answer is, "No, you don't have to love digging ditches, but if it is your first entry onto the ladder of success, you say, 'I'm glad somebody gave me the opportunity to dig ditches and I'm going to do it so well, I won't be here long.'"

You can be inspired by having found something even though you are making mistakes in the beginning and even though it is a little distasteful taking on a new discipline that you haven't learned before. You don't have to love it, you just have to learn to appreciate America, appreciate opportunity and appreciate the person who brought you the good news; who found you.

If you will embrace the disciplines associated with the new opportunity you will soon find that your self-confidence starts to grow, that you go from being a skeptic to being a believer. And soon when you go out person to person, talking to people, you will find it to be the most thrilling opportunity in the world. Every person you meet - what could it be? Unlimited! Maybe a friend for life.

The next person could be an open door to retiring. The next person could be a colleague for years to come. It's big time stuff. And sometimes in the beginning when we are just getting started we don't always see how big it is. So, before you are tempted to give up or get discouraged, remember all success is based on long term commitment, faith, discipline, attitude and a few stepping stones along the way. You might not like the stone you are on right now, but it's sure to be one of the stones that lead to great opportunities in the future.

SIMPLE COMMUNICATIONS

by Zig Ziglar

When I entered the sales world, one of the first things my manager taught me was to keep my presentation so clear and uncluttered that a child could understand what I was saying. This advice has had a lasting impact on my life. I frequently remind my audiences that I speak and write at the 7th grade, 9th month level. I do this because I've discovered that at that level virtually everyone can clearly understand the message. As my friend, Dr. Steve Franklin, a college professor from Emory University who taught me this, said, "The great truths in life are the simple ones. You do not need three moving parts and four syllables for it to be significant." He then pointed out that "There are only three pure colors—but look that Michelangelo did with them. There are only seven notes, but look at what Chopin, Beethoven and Vivaldi did with them. For that matter, look at what Elvis did with two!" Most of us prefer things we can understand. Lincoln's Gettysburg Address is short and clear with nearly 80 percent of the words only one syllable. "God is love"—three words, all of them one syllable. Seriously, now, when you ask someone what they had for breakfast, would you really appreciate it if they responded that they had the "upper part of a hog's hind leg, with two oval bodies encased in a shell laid by a female bird?" Or would you prefer to have the person answer, "We had ham and eggs for breakfast"? And remember, language changes. At one time we referred to a person who spread rumors around the office as a "gossip." Now that person is called an "information specialist." Personally, I prefer simple, clear, direct communications.

UPCOMING EVENTS.

1. Old Chicago July 10th and 15th, Apple Valley.
Rethinking Retirement.

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Tools for Thought

❖ *In the book of Job, Satan tests God's omniscience by holding up Job as an upright servant who adheres to Gods' law because Job is prosperous. Satan tempts fate; saying that if God would take everything from Job, Job would curse God, and turn from Him. In a short period of time, God takes not only Jobs' wealth, but his family, and Jobs' health. Job is repeatedly tempted by Satan and others to renounce God.*

Job comes close to renouncing God. In the end, he has a moment of clarity, and repents his temptation. Having lost his gambit Satan retreats and Job is restored.

This is instructive for us who advise people on financial matters. The first lesson I draw from this is to know what my skills are and to stick with what I do best. This is important because I am different from other advisors in many ways. The value added aspects of my practice are unique. The second lesson I take from this biblical instruction that my clients and potential clients believe in something bigger than themselves.

It takes energy and effort to challenge popular concepts of estate protection, income management, and being willing to make the changes that are necessary.

In my workshops and private meetings I am committed to teaching people about how they can make small changes that have large impacts on their lives. The entire process is about what is best for you, the client or potential client. Jobs' story is about faith, challenged. My clients' experience with me should reflect the same, and like Job, at the end of the book, be safe, and protected.

THAT DANCE IS OFF LIMITS! by Sheila Murray Bethel, Ph.D.

What dance did you do that shocked your parents? Depending on your age, it might have been slam dancing, break dancing, the lambada, the smurf, or the twist. The current dance craze is always changing because young people through history have proclaimed their uniqueness by trying new things. They are tenacious and highly adept at change because their attitudes haven't yet hardened.

Babies are a great example of tenacity and adaptability. Watch a toddler try something new. It tries and fails and keeps trying until it figures out what works. When they get to school age, children on the playground stretch and explore, eager to extend their boundaries. Today's teens experiment with purple hair and rings worn everywhere but on the fingers, forcing their parents to confront the discomforts of change.

So, why do we get rigid as we get older? Why do we start seeing the status quo as safe and protective, something to be defended instead of challenged? Is it possible to again become more flexible, to recapture that exhilaration we felt on the dance floor and on the playground, that sublime sense that everything is possible? The answer is yes, we can feel excitement about change again.

Think about the kind of changes that make you uneasy, even afraid. What do you actually fear? Losing hard-earned success? Safety? Control? Have you finally figured out how things are and suddenly they're something else? Is your sense of identity in jeopardy? Your answers take you to the next step. Consider the following tactics for bringing back a childlike (not childish) energy to dealing with the unpleasant changes in your life.

1. Try to get another perspective. Is there someone you can ask for an outside or second opinion? Can you stand on your head, figuratively if not literally, to get a different viewpoint?

2. Check your assumptions. Could they be preventing you from seeing excitement and opportunity amidst the turmoil? Make a list and then challenge them, one by one, with childlike intensity.

3. Imagine the kind of people who would welcome this particular change. What would excite them? What advantages would they see? How different are they from you? Which of their perceived benefits would and could get you excited too?

Remember the last time you were totally enthusiastic about something. Concentrate on that feeling as you mentally switch to a new image of the change you are facing. Recapture the sense of adventure that was part of your life when you stepped out on the dance floor and let yourself go.

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