



Health

Winning at the Game of Life!

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By Dr. Mitchell Flaum and Dr. Bennett Flaum

The expression “living the good life” has been used to epitomize what we view as the “Great American Dream.” But what is “the good life” anyway, and how do we achieve it? Furthermore, could we all agree upon a universal definition of “the good life” as a shared utopian ideal? Finally, if life is, as told by guru Sai Baba, “a game”, what are the rules by which we can play and come out as winners? What is the “game plan” of life?

Upon reviewing the vast tomes of wisdom literature written by sages across time, we discover many commonalities of thought regarding the ideal path for mankind to follow. Among the threads of wisdom that comprise my own inspirational quilt, I often turn to the words of a great Talmudic scholar named Hillel. He is quoted in Ethics of the Fathers as saying, “If I am not for myself, who will be? If I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, then when?” Paraphrasing his adage, three life principles emerge: “Be Self-Loving; Be Socially Conscious; and Do It Now.”

Loving oneself involves more than just having high self-esteem. It is the call to claim our personal power, our natural birthright as human beings. Owning one’s personal power also implies taking full responsibility for our own destiny, and being the sole writer, director and producer of our life story. In order to do so, we need a clear vision of who we are and where we are going, an organized plan to get there, and the perseverance to make our dream a reality.

Cultivating high self-esteem and commanding a sense of personal power does not come easily to most of us. It involves letting go of the familial, social, and cultural baggage that we absorb as children and adults as faulty messages about who we are. Such misguided information may easily hinder the full realization of our potential. Owning our power means being disciplined about listening to our inner voice and vigilant in speaking our truth, making authentic choices, and creatively thinking “out of the box.” It is the call to recognize our unique gifts and talents, and honor the Divine essence that resides within each of us. It is also the ability to constantly nurture ourselves with positive self-thoughts and surround ourselves with loving, supportive family and friends.

Winning at the game of life, however, goes beyond personal achievement. It implies our active engagement with the world, contributing as a member of the local and global village known as the Earth. It is recognizing our partnership in the joint venture called Life, and tending to the Garden as a steward of Creation. Winning also means savoring each and every moment as an awesome opportunity to make a difference. In short, we honor Time and make it sacred by cherishing the here-and-now of our existence as a once-in-a-lifetime gift.

Sometimes I view life as a giant jigsaw puzzle, each of us a vital piece needed to complete the gestalt. At other times my metaphor is that of an orchestra, each of us playing a different but essential instrument needed to complete the universal symphony. Perhaps we’re all members of a giant football team playing in a constant scrimmage against the forces of darkness and evil. Or perhaps the game is Hide and Seek, as we in earthly garb become the seekers of the legendary Holy Grail, searching to find and reclaim the hidden Divine sparks scattered throughout Creation.



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While the Ten Commandments provide us with guidelines covering our obligations to others (G-d, family, neighbors, community), I offer my own Twelve Rule as a personal, psychospiritual life empowerment road map.

The Twelve Rules:

- 1-Love and honor yourself fully (warts and all)
- 2- Be true to your unique self (so go ahead and dye your hair purple)
- 3-Live life with integrity (walk like you talk)
- 4-Set your goals in alignment with your values (but make sure to follow your bliss)
- 5-Love and respect others fully and unconditionally (even when they drive you crazy)
- 6-Live life with passion-savoring each moment (so you’ll never look back with regret)
- 7-Always give it all you’ve got (and then some)
- 8-View every moment as an opportunity grow, learn and change (it ain’t over ‘till the fat lady sings)
- 9-Find joy in life’s simple pleasures (sunsets, butterflies and chocolate)
- 10-Let go and let G-d (it’s already in the works and you are part of the bigger picture)
- 11-Always show gratitude for life’s gifts and blessings (even a smile will do)
- 12-Know that it’s all a gift and a blessing (so be careful what you wish for!)

Summing it all up,
Rabbi Akiva would teach his disciples :
-Every day a song
-Every day a song

Black Tie’s Recommended Reading

