

Evolving Draft

A Few Psychological Hints To Improve Your Life

I have been a psychologist for nearly sixty years and offer these thoughts to you to help you become the better person you want to be. My whole career has been an attempt to help folks with weaknesses get stronger and strong folks make their good lives better. The following brief hints address the common issues facing many of us as we live our lives. Some may apply to you... and the others you may have already resolved. I hope these items may stir some internal thoughts, or discussions with those close to you. The items are not listed in importance of resolution to help one in their individual lives.

1. **Hanging On vs. Letting Go.** It is time to stop praying or wishing that the past will change. What's done is done, what's past is past. Too many of us can't let go of an injustice or tragedy in our past...dwelling on things that cannot be changed. One's efforts should be focused on letting go and moving on with our lives.
2. **Guilt vs. Regret.** Guilt is anger turned back on one's self and is self destructive. Even when some terrible event has occurred...an accident injuring another, a comment negatively affecting another...guilt is a negative emotion and will not lead to productive improvement. One should take positive steps to Let Go (see #1) and employ positive behaviors to turn guilt into regret. (e.g. Make amends, apologize.)
3. **Praise vs. Encouragement.** Praise is judgmental and focuses on one's worth as a person..."You are a wonderful boy

for getting all A's." Your'e a wonderful husband." Encouragement focuses on the behavior... "All of your hard work paid off...look at those A's." "You make such a difference in our lives because you are so helpful to all of us." Praise of a child can result in the child seeking more and more praise ("How did I do Dad?) or even in adults ("Is the dinner good enough?" How does your car look after I washed it?") Encouragement develops a respect for positive behaviors in oneself.

4. Judging vs. Acceptance. It is tough to be around folks who are always judging what you say or do. My friend always says, "I'll let God do the judging." Accepting personalities form better relationships and acknowledge that what they believe/do may not always be perfect.

6. Arguing vs. Opinion. A good argument about an issue which is controversial can be enlightening if logic is used and emotion is controlled. Sometimes all of the participants increase their knowledge. To argue which team is best can be fun. Stating one's opinion that one car model is better than another is not arguing but merely stating an opinion unless the speaker continues to try to get the other person to change their opinion.

7. Privilege vs. Second Fiddle Skills. People of privilege often come to expect special treatment from others. Expecting to be honored or treated better than others can warp a personality and damage relationships. Taking opportunities to serve others in an anonymous manner can be good for the soul and teach one the value of equality and service. Serving in a soup line for the homeless, speaking to homeless folks who do not know you can bring important insights.

8. Commands vs. Invitations. Being told "We are going to a movie," is different than than being asked, "Would you like to go to a movie?" The problem arises when in a relationship a person

starts to see every invitation as a command and then becomes resentful. If you don't want to go to this particular movie, say "I would rather not." Don't go and then and then be angry...work on your assertiveness skills.

9. Goals vs. Meaning. Goals are about things you hope to accomplish. "I hope to improve my golf handicap to a 12." "I plan to lose 12 pounds." Meaning is one's reason for living and what drives one forward in life's journey. Having a purpose, feelings of belonging and transcending the many obstacles in life helps one derive meaning in their lives.

10. Love vs. Hate. Hate, among all our base instincts, according to Nancy Gibbs, is the most distinctly human. In animals, violence and venom are tools of survival; in humans, of supremacy. Small scared people hate, self-hating people hate, bullied and betrayed people hate, as though hate will make them large and safe and strong." Of course, love is the answer. When love overcomes hate the world will be a better place...and that will be true in each of lives as well.

11. Lies vs. Truth. It is so much easier to tell the truth than to lie. I always say, "Take the easy way out in you lives...tell the truth." You don't have to remember who you told what or which version you told so-in-so. Liars have no one's respect.

12. Going Alone vs. Seeking Help. It is tough for many of us to admit that we need help. Those needing help are usually the last ones to know it, so when feeling despondent or depressed or blue or out of sorts, talk to a friend you respect...you may even benefit from professional help. Admitting when we are weak or wrong or confused is not a measure of weakness but of strength.