

## INTRODUCTION

Dear young friend!

If you consider yourself important,  
if you want to help yourself,  
if you want to be happy, successful, strong, proud and free,  
if you want to save time by avoiding trial and error, and instead  
to make use of the experience of others,  
in a nutshell, if you deem life coaching important, listen to what  
I wrote with all five senses, your mind, your heart, and your spirit.

### **My First Advice: Know Yourself Well**

If you don't know your current location as you try to find your way on a map in a city you don't know about, you can't know which way to go as well. In the same vein, if you don't know yourself well, the decisions you will be taking will not serve your goals. Your life would be spent running around in the streets, dictated by the whims of coincidence.

A person who knows herself well would have an accurate grasp of her strengths and weaknesses, capabilities and skills, not to mention opportunities, and threats. Observing oneself and making accurate analyses is not an inherent talent, but a skill to be acquired and developed.

### **Design Yourself a Pyramid of Goals**

The brain is a machine programming itself. If we take the driver seat in a car, the first thing we would do before starting off the engine

is to think and make a plan. Then the brain would wander away in other thoughts.

Yet, while thinking about other concerns of life, the brain would still be able to take us to our destination as it would then be on some kind of auto-pilot.

The same applies in the journey of life as well. Setting your short- and long-term goals and objectives allows you to program your brain accurately. To do so, you should design yourself a pyramid of goals. You should order your priorities in the rank of importance, and should top them with the single most important goal and priority you have. And make sure that such top goal is an abstract one: What kind of a person you want to be? What would you like your tombstone to read when you pass away? The decisions you will take should always refer to these priorities.

You should always keep that file open in your brain as you try and avoid the distractions, temptations, and misleading pleasures on the way to your goal. This would allow you to take the helm of events. But if you lack an objective, the exact opposite would happen, and the events would lead you.

### **Plan Your Future**

Aside from the goal to set, you should also have a road map to follow during your journey of life. And don't fall into the trap of excessive occupation with details as you draw your road map. The success lies in the details; so does the devil... Any detail that distracts from the overall goal can be malignant. A detail serving the goal, on the other hand, prevents errors and leads you to correct decisions.

When drawing your road map, and developing your action plan, get yourself some role models. But don't forget to maintain your own identity as well. You should be like a bee; getting flavors from every flavor. Your family, people in your community, your teachers, religious and cultural opinion leaders should be the resources you depend on.

### **Get Yourself a Passionate Project**

The most important thing to motivate you and take you to action is focusing on a realistic yet passionate project. Hopes can be kept

up only through concrete as well as abstract projects worthy to live by. Support your self-confidence with your ideals.

That is the only way to achieve an idealist, activist, and realist equilibrium.

### **To Succeed, Persevere in the face of Difficulties**

“No pain, no gain.” Don’t ever forget this adage. Life rewards people who are able to endure hardship. If you want to keep your head up and live a honorable life, you should try and earn your living through your own efforts.

### **Be Emotionally Literate**

Neuro-science studies proved that emotions are scientific categories in and of themselves. According to the changing paradigms of communications psychology, 70-80% of all communications are based on non-verbal communications. Tone of your voice, subliminal stress, looks, mimics and gestures are some of the means to convey emotional data in interactions with other people. 20-30% of all communications, on the other hand, are about informative communications, i.e. words uttered and the meaning conveyed.

*Now the paradigm “reason is supreme” is no longer accepted. Keep up with the change, and be emotionally literate.*

Autism is associated with the failure of developing emotional literacy in the brain. Emphatic communications assumes emotional literacy. Social emotions, the power to persuade and influence are all about the development of emotional literacy. In human brain, mirror neurons acting like wireless internet devices are actually nerve cells which perceive strong emotions. Human brain cells work like small electricity generators, all the while offering thought and emotion frequencies in tune with the universal flow, in the shape of a wave form.

Today, neurophilosophy, neurotheology, neuroeconomics, and neuromarketing are at the center of scientific debates. In 2002, the Nobel Award for Economics was extended to a psychologist studying “psychological factors in crisis management”. We live in an age where the effect of emotions on economics is now proven scientifically.

Now the paradigm “reason is supreme” is no longer accepted. Keep up with the change, and be emotionally literate.

### **Think of Emotions in Six Dimensions**

Developing emotional awareness is no easy task. If you are angry about something, you probably need the idea that makes you angry. If you intelligently analyze your emotions, you will have an easier time managing them.

You can manage your emotions by thinking of them in six dimensions. You should think of them along the front-back, right-left, and up-down axes: future-past, strength-weakness, opportunity-threat. You should make the decision on which way to proceed through a robust analysis of these.

### **Have Ethical Values**

Be sincere, frank, open and natural. Love and cherish the people. Share with them. Be honest, hard-working, and true to your word. Be fair and sharing.

Think of it: is it better to be self-seeking or to be virtuous? In the short term, self-seeking people gain more. In the medium- to long-term, however, it is always the virtuous that wins. Even though the evil may initially prevail in the struggle between good and evil, in the end, the good conquers all.

### **Be Careful When Praising Wealth**

Rumi once said “keep it at hand, but not in your heart.” You can own many things, but don’t let them own you. Wealth, prosperity, fame and office would serve you as long as you don’t forget that money is not the object, but just a tool. But if you put temporal pleasures and wealth at the core of your heart, they would get a hold on you. Never forget that the rich is the person who knows the value of her holdings, and not the one who simply owns a lot.

True wealth is the lasting one. Engaging in profitable trade of your sociological and psychological capital is also a form of wealth. Seeking wealth in both abstract and concrete domains of life would be the smartest and most useful thing you can do.

### **Have Aesthetic Values**

One of the *raison d'être* of mankind is to make the world more beautiful and livable place. It is a genetic disposition of mankind to have affection for perfection and beauty. Exaggeration, on the other hand, is the greatest enemy of aesthetic values. You should avoid exaggerated make-up and tacky dresses as an individual with natural disposition towards beauty and aesthetics. True, such exaggeration draw attention; but they are not aesthetically pleasing. Your sense of aesthetics should be compatible with your position.

### **Don't Let Popular Culture Guide You**

People who maintain their own identity while keeping up with the day are, in a sense, develop as they preserve their personality. People who preserve their identity and personality don't get assimilated. Those who cherish their own language are more successful in preserving their culture. People with national goals, with an awareness of their history and culture are composed of individuals with ideals as well as established personality and identity, who are at peace with their past. You should change, but not transform.

### **Be Innovative**

Being innovative is crucial. Scientific studies prove that people who are open to new experiences get better chances. A fear of taking risks prevent your development. You should establish a balance between making only the absolutely correct moves, and never making a mistake.

Taking a risk to do the right thing is more ethical, more valuable, and more important than taking a risk to avoid a mistake. Have solid justification when doing new and distinctive things. Be innovative but don't be an adventurer. Never forget that people who are afraid of trying new things fail to achieve progress by making the mistake of doing nothing at all, and thus fail to develop their thoughts and are doomed to be the slaves of the past.

### **Have the Code to a Strong Memory**

Make use of the six gatekeepers of memory. Engage in mental exercises by asking the questions "who, what, where, when, why and

how” as the code to a strong memory: 5W, 1H. These exercises will make it possible for you to tolerate and solidify your gains.

### **Be Free; Trust in People, But...**

Your first victory should be the one against the seductive wants you have. The true freedom is the freedom from one’s wants. Running after one’s wants and pleasure was the former paradigm of psychology. Do not fall for simple pleasures as you seek to demolish the walls and break the chains.

Be like a steamboat rather than a sailboat. Don’t let someone else direct you. Don’t let your power be a priority for you.

Neyzen once said “We told to ourselves ‘rise up the people of this land’. When we did, we noticed that the chairs we left were quickly occupied by others.” Trust in people, but don’t let them take advantage of you. As a rule trust; as an exception, doubt.

Share everything with your friends. With your enemies, share only the law. Meet kindness with kindness. But do not respond to evil with benevolence. All you will achieve will be to feed it further. But don’t seek injustice against evil as well. Wrongdoings cannot be remedied by further wrongdoings.

### **Save Your Social Capital**

The West has just found about social emotions. They are talking about empathy and achieving happiness by giving out. Recent studies on social brain, in turn, also revealed the importance of extending social contact for mental and physical health.

Maintain the values of helping each other and sharing, which still prevail in Eastern culture. First of all, keep an eye for and help your close relatives. Have your own social responsibility projects.

We rise by what we give, not by what we get. People who work hard to give out rather than to get increase their social capital. The real achievement is not about getting, but about giving out. Helping each other is a language of love: it is behavioral love. In other words, it is the behavior exhibited through love. It is love expressed in deeds rather than words. Being kind is more important than being perfect.

Work hard to reinforce your social trust. Act friendly to people. Be a good listener and keep your word.

Don't forget that success is directly proportional to the trust one's close circle has in her.

### **The Only Competition is with Yourself; Be Brave and Self-Confident**

The Mount Success cannot be climbed with your hands in your pockets. There are no asphalt roads to achievement. Peace and happiness has its price. That price is courage to take risks for what is correct. Believing in oneself and self-confidence are the keys to success. What makes you cute and pretty is not about your looks but about your self-confidence. Courage is not about taking on risks. It is about using reason and intelligence in the face of danger.

You can achieve lasting success through the will to try, courage, loyalty to truth, and realistic self-confidence.

The more powerful the wind, the stronger would be the trees. The obstacles are there not to stop you, but to make you stronger. You should allow for some storms on the way to success.

There is no failure; there are just results. What keeps kites flying is not the power of wind, but the kite's ability to stand by that power in those altitudes.

You cannot win if you don't take the risk to lose.

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### **Don't Deceive Yourself or Others**

The biggest capital and inheritance is righteousness. For the righteous man is happier than the wealthy one. The righteous man is like a tree that bears fruit no matter what.

Yunus Emre said

*The statements would be right if you are straight yourself;*

*One cannot find righteousness if you are skewed.*

Deceit is the opposite of righteousness. A liar would think the others lie as well. She has doubts about everything. As she loses her trust in people, she would feel threatened. She would always act defensively. She cannot relax and be happy. The liar would try to get joy and happiness from amusement. Acting defensively, her brain secretes acidic chemicals, leading to getting old earlier. Stress hormones disrupt both her happiness and her body.

The day you stop deceiving yourself and others, you will get the most pleasant of the feelings, that is inner peace, well-being, and tranquility. If you are a human being, and if you committed the error of lying, wash yourself in the stream of repentance and apology. The best way to fight evil is to foster good. Doing so would both purify and beautify you.

If what you want is one day's joy, have some fun; if you want a joyful life, help people. The people who help others climbing stairs would some day meet them on their own way down.

Remember; righteousness brings inner peace as a short-term benefit, and the respect of others as a long-term one.

### **Maintain the Equilibrium of Rights and Responsibilities**

Don't be someone who is all about her rights, putting responsibilities on backburner. That is one sure way to achieve loneliness.

If you embrace egocentrism, all you will think about will be your rights. You are neither the only passenger on the bus, nor the owner of the bus. Come up with a robust understanding of the rights and obligations of others, as well as your rights and obligations. Do not violate borders in human relationships. Defend yourself if they violate your boundaries though. Neither oppress others, nor get oppressed.

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### **Be Aware of the Three Stages of the Relationship with the Opposite Sex**

Do not forget about the three stages of the relationship with the opposite sex: friendship, flirt, and marriage. Sex without a perspec-



tive for marriage is a form of lying. Sex should be with a special and important person. And that person would be one's spouse. That is the ideal. Try to achieve that. Approaching others to just have some fun with reference to popular culture, deceiving them about the intent is not a behavior of good character. Be careful; do not fall for false premises of marriage.

### **Learn about Cash Management**

You should have some inkling of cash management and the concept of budget around age 10. Spending money wisely, and saving some, is no easy skill. Keep hold on the dichotomy of needs and wants. When you utterly desire something, first ask yourself about the scale of your need. Only then go out on shopping.

### **Engage in Anonymous Acts of Goodness**

Anonymous acts of goodness are the ones committed without disturbing the people in need. Such acts are remembered and bring returns right when you had forgotten about them, in a form you would never expect. And if they don't, always remember that you committed them not for benefit but for doing the right thing.

Mother Theresa was asked how the world could be rendered a better place, and responded "by doing a good deed for every good deed." Enjoy the pleasure of putting a smile on a poor person or making a child happy, or reducing the pain and suffering of someone who is ill.

### **Be Humble**

Vanity would be the key to the room to house all evil. The key to the room to house all good, on the other hand, is humility. That is also the key to personal development. Humility is not about thinking of oneself as lower than others, but as their equal. Each person is authentic and unique. Original things cannot be truly compared. Humility is the skill of developing equal relationships with people. It applies everywhere: at work, at home, at school, in a family... Vainglorious people, on the other hand, can't find happiness. They would always try to prove themselves, as they fear of being someone ordinary. True humility is the skill to notice and accept one's own

faults. A person who faces her true self gets peace with herself. One needs to live a true life to be happy.

### **On Happiness**

Happy people are not the ones who have the best of everything, but who make optimal use of what they have. Joys are like doors. One would be closed as another would be opened. The people who make good use of these opportunities are the happy ones.

Have you ever thought why ill-bred extravagant playboys get poor in the end? For, these people are mired in a panic about inadequacy and dissatisfaction, unable to see the whole picture. They set their sights on a victim, and start a crisis, never thinking for a second if that would cause problems or not for the victim. They don't know how to achieve happiness through production. All they want is to achieve happiness through consumption. People who acquire wealth through plunder and loot also have the same mindset. They don't know how to produce. They had never been subjects of ethics principles. Instead they had been the object of false friendships. That is why they are bound to get poor.

We cannot pick and choose the events we will encounter. But we can choose our reactions. Fatalism refers to acceptance once a result had occurred. The admission of defeat before the process barely began is not fatalism, but laziness.

A person who always complains about her state has a hidden hubris. She believes that she deserves only the best. She cannot be happy with small things. She neglects herself as she tries to change the world.

A happy person is not an arrogant one, but one who has respect for herself. The happy person manages to derive pleasure from ordinary things, such as enjoying a cup of tea... The happy person fears death, but she manages to live as if she does not.

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### **Skills Developed in Stormy Seas**

Patience, compassion, industriousness, and responsibility are instilled by a stormy life.

Patience is compliance with discipline that is filled with love. Patience is also a mediative action. The right form of patience is the active one. It is supposed to be in tune with the pace and rhythm of nature. Patience is not about sitting still and waiting.

Compassion and mercy are the antidote to violence. It is the anxiety about the possibility of harming someone. It brings happiness to both sides. Unrequited love is compassion. It is the feeling that characterizes mothers.

Shame, the ability to feel regret, respect, remorse, mercy are initially inhibitive feelings, which would bring much benefit in the medium- to long-term.

People who blush when they lie were, just like today, in the minority in the day of Namik Kemal the poet – a state of affairs leading him to utter the following verses:

*Eyes would get wet by just peeling an onion,  
Yet these oxen don't even care as the treasury is peeled away,  
They don't have any inkling of shame, words don't matter to them,  
Obstinacy is in vain, just nod in agreement  
Be quiet, say hello, and consume your salary.*

When setting your direction in the storm, the winds make you stronger instead of hurting you. If you do not drop the will and resolution to improve yourself, and combine goodness and modesty, you will have a strong character.

### **Skills Developed in Silence**

Wisdom, honesty, acting in line with principles, and with restraint are philosophical attitudes. They arise through deep thought. “Eat less, sleep less, speak less” is a principle of sufism. You can refer to that principle for the purposes of self-awareness, one of the foundations of positive psychology. The basic advice extended by neuropsychology, such as “thinking twice before acting” or “thinking twice before speaking” also have the same emphasis. Developing yourself and your life-skills can only be possible if you set aside some quiet time for yourself.

## **How You Say Something is as Crucial as What You Say**

Every activity, every act has two aspects: essence, and form. Even if you are right about the essence, some mistake in the method could put you in the wrong. It is necessary to apply the right method when giving medicine to the patient. If you use a pill where an injection is needed, the efforts would be in vain.

## **Have Strong Faith**

Thinking only about this world is disrespectful of the creator. The universe is actually a force, and it is a living one. The life is not limited to the one on this world. Belief in the afterworld makes this life meaningful, and offers consolation. Don't miss on this opportunity.

Refusing to believe in transcendental reality and the unobservable is not to the benefit of mankind. Belief and trust in and submission to the owner of eternity gives a form of pleasure that gives joy in both worlds.

Life is a software, the spirit is a program. If you cannot read the files that bring meaning to it, you would be doomed to believing that life is nothing but a struggle, and existence is just a coincidence in a universe where living things would be embroiled in a fight where only the strong remains standing.

Read the files bringing meaning correctly. You will see that solidarity and balance is the essence of life, while struggle is rather exceptional. Any work would disseminate one thousand message about its creator, for every single message it relays about itself. But these are visible only to those who have an eye for these messages. Studying your body alone would provide sufficient clues. Your cells, veins and nerves are not in competition with each other. Instead, they balance and complement each other. The heart helps the stomach; the stomach helps the brain; the brain, in turn, helps all organs.

In the universe, the goal is to achieve equilibrium among all species, achieving a harmony among minuses and pluses. The increase in the population of ticks when bird populations fall is a result of disrupted balance. Stopping those who disrupt the harmony of the universal orchestra is not an intervention; it is an effort to maintain rights in the universe.

O, the young one, don't ever forget that you are born an observer of this universe. Reference to the spirit inside this body spirit is actually a reference to the program running on a machine. The two are complementary. One is the hardware, the other is the software. If you think about the dialectics of the exam, you can secure a most effective and utilitarian bargain for the hours you have on this rock. The most profitable merchants are the ones who observe best. If you are interested in this topic, I'd recommend you my book titled "Psychology of Belief".

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### **Don't Stray from Scientific Methodology**

Strong beliefs challenged in the light of reason and science would make you happy.

Science is the effort to seek and find truth. Transcendental truth can be understood through the theory of reason. Thoughts and images help develop symbolic thought, whereas definitions help develop conceptual thought. Finally theories help develop abstract thinking. Experiment and observation, and positivist thought paves the first road to truth. Reasoning methods can explain the cases empirical and experimental thought cannot. Reasoning methods provide the second road to truth. The third road is about intuitions, while the fourth is through beliefs. You can proceed to good, accurate, and beautiful truth through these roads.

### **Be Fair and Democratic**

Democracy is not just a value; it is also a method. As your method, lend an ear to criticism, avoid forcing your ideas on others, and respect different opinions. Participatory, pluralist and libertarian method functions through these behavior.

Justice requires courage. If you manage to be fair contrary to your interests, you can be a better person. Don't forget the concept of rights has its roots in biology. If fairness is the goal, democracy would be the method.

## **Think Positive**

The optimist is such an observer, that looking out of the window she notices the trees, birds, flowers and the bees. The pessimist, on the other hand, notices uglier things such as rubble and mud. One spends her life in bliss, the other in sorrow. If you can assume a positive perspective towards the life, the events, yourself, and your surroundings, if you can think positively and try to see the beauty, you will enjoy your life. Your brain is a self-programming organ. If you program yourself to having a positive outlook, you would automatically develop an awareness for the opportunities to come your way.

You would establish positive links of meaning, and people would call you lucky. Thinking positive is not merely playing Pollyanna. Thinking positive is about being aware of both the positive and the negative side of one concept, taking precautions against the negative one while waiting for the positive to arrive. Brace for the winter, wait for the summer.

## **Be Careful About Concealed Ignorance**

Some ignorant people wear suits. They are modern in the dressing cabinet, and thus deceive people. Make sure to discern impulsive people who act without thinking, who are angry at everything, who speak uselessly, who do not heed advice, who do not keep a secret, who is unable to shut her mouth, who spend needlessly, who fail in time management, who fall for everything she hears, who trust others easily, and who are well-meaning but ignorant. They are useless people. People who are ignorant and double-dealer, shifty, and capricious consider themselves wise. They are, in turn, harmful.

## **Develop Your Strategic Thinking Skills**

Strategic thinking skills refer to the skill of short-, medium- and long-term thinking. It is the skill to think in distinct levels so as to setting aside the highest amount of time for the most important issue on the pyramid of goals. Robust time management, and correct use of time is a function of the level of development of this skill. People who are able to correctly and efficiently use their strengths,

energy, and intellectual capital abide by this form of thought. Make sure to develop your mental skills for strategic thinking, timing, ordering, resistance to distractions, and avoiding pleasure traps.

### **Learn Categorical Thinking**

You can come across obsessive people. These people would ponder on a trivial matter for hours. They would feel ten-fold sorrow on unnecessary things. These people are also characterized by high levels of sorrow. They wear out their brains needlessly. Yet, people with categorical thinking skills first define the problem, identify potential solutions, decide on one, make plans for implementation, and proceed to the next problem.

In other words, they can switch categories. People who are capable of healthy multitasking have strong categorical thinking skills. To achieve success, you should learn categorical thinking.

### **Be Open to Dialog**

Someone who is confident in her ideas would not shy away from dialog. Dialog eliminates prejudices. Once prejudices wither away, new inventions and change arises. The free market of ideas facilitate the development of robust ideas, while shaky ones are either changed or abandoned.

No one can know everything. Our teachers can only give us the keys to the treasure of knowledge. We are the people who should seek and find the treasures. Brain-centric theory of learning argues that development could happen only in the presence of life-long love for learning. The structuring of the relationship between the teacher and the student as a “learning organization” helps reduce the fear of committing errors. Only the dead people stop making mistakes. Don’t be afraid of making mistakes. Be open to dialog to overcome your prejudices.

In conclusion, my young friend, an awareness of yourself on your journey through life, emotional literacy, choosing the correct guides and role models, and a project for the future are must haves. These values would take you directly to your ideals. A correct definition and coding of yourself depends on what you allow yourself to do. It is up to you, to be as wise as Rumi, as productive as Edison... Unless

you allow it, no one can code you as an unhappy, failed, weak, and dishonorable person, nor transform you into one.



**Chapter One**  
**PROBLEMS YOUTH BRINGS ABOUT, AND THE**  
**MEANS TO COPE**



## **THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE YOUNG ONE AND THE PARENT**

Throughout history, conflicts between generations always existed. Even millennia-old papyri found in Egypt refer to conflicts between generations. Such conflicts are most natural, and serve the progress of people. Not only the opportunities and possibilities available during the childhood of your parents are not the same as the ones available today, but also your views on any given topic may differ. To make peace and trust prominent in a family, both you and your parents should act correctly at the onset of differences.

A study carried out in the University of Nebraska in the US found three features characterizing happy families. The first one was spending time together. The members of these families took vacation together, dined together, and shared experiences together. The second one was about the frequent use of the words of admiration, recognition, acclaim and approval, rather than words of criticism, disapproval, accusation, and judgment. The third feature was that these families regularly went to church. In other words, the members of these families had a common philosophy of life and shared values. They had comparable perspectives to events, and engaged in shared cultural experiences.

The findings of the study also provided some insights into the domains of conflict most families experience. In case the members of the family did not share much in the household, such as the young members of the family refusing to go to vacation with their parents, choosing instead their friends, this would lead to increased anxiety on part of the parents.

They would naturally think that their kids are moving away from the family, that they would commit some mistakes, ruining their lives under the influence of wrong persons. Such an anxiety would push the parents to exerting greater control over their children.

### **The Search for Identity**

One of the leading sources of anxiety for your parents is your education and future. They desire your future self-sufficiency, achievement of good and commendable deeds on your part. They want you to be happy. In this context, it is only natural for them to be anxious and make plans accordingly. However, you should also remember that a good personality often is more important than courses alone. Someone who keeps her words, who does not lie, who loves people and who has many virtues may not necessarily be very successful at school. But in real life, she may achieve much higher levels of success. On the other hand, there are many people who always scored top grades at school, but who lack a social life to follow one's years at the school, who dwell at the bottom of the social aquifer, who frequently change jobs and who suffer many problems in her marriage. In Turkish culture in particular, docile and well-behaving children are often commended. Obedience is applauded. Even though much has changed nowadays, still rule-abiding children, whose views don't stray far from those of her parents, who are shy and timid and excessively docile can make their parents happy. In case the young one starts acting contrary to these expectations, various problems may arise in the household, bringing serious conflict along.

It was only natural for you to ask questions on the lines "Who am I? Which direction should I take, and why?", just like any other kid. These crucial questions and your answers to them will shape your future life. Your identity will be shaped through the characteristics you get from your parents and the wider society. Your parents, who intend to raise you in the best way possible should be aware that they cannot cover much distance by just forcing you to compliance with their will. They should set you free, and provide opportunities, all the while guiding you on the basis of your talent.

Of course this poses a risk for them. It is always possible for you to wander away to places you shouldn't, do things you better not, and get friends you should stay away from. However, it is impossible to truly understand life without getting acquainted with the good and the bad. Some things can be learned only through experience. Even though trial and error is a costly method, your parents should still take that risk.

### Choosing Friends

Numerous studies underline two shared characteristics among unhappy and failed youth who often engage in substance abuse: weak family bonds and bad company. These two factors truly have a serious impact on human life. That is why you cannot be too careful in choosing your friends. Especially, having a circle of friends of the same age group, to share the positive as well as the negative developments, making one feel good even in the face of unfortunate events, for man cannot live alone. From time to time your parents intervene in your relationship with your friends. And they do so with your well-being in mind, with a view to protecting you from the influence of bad company. Their anxieties abate as they get to know your friends.

The dictum often voiced by parents "I trust you, but I don't trust your circle of friends" is not a realistic one. Indeed, the phrase itself is paradoxical. If your parents truly trust you, they would know that you would not engage in friendships with people who cannot be trusted.

*To make peace and trust prominent in a family, both you and your parents should act correctly at the onset of differences.*

Your attitudes would also play a major part in terms of persuading your parents about your friends. If you don't forget that everyone, including your friend, can err, you can say to your parents "I am aware my friend has such an imperfection. But I have a specific attitude towards himself that is well aware of his imperfection, not allowing that problem to affect me." Coupled with honest and sound reasoning, such an approach would go a long way to reduce the risk of conflict within the family.

Sharing both the positive and the negative aspects of your experience during an excursion or activity you had with your friends

would also help minimize conflict. Such a behavior fosters your parents' trust in you. You should always remember that uncertainty really damages trust, and you can easily increase others' trust in you by simply eliminating uncertainties.

To earn the trust you deserve, you should make sure that your parents understand your responsible character, established goals, decided attitudes, awareness of what to do in the face of wrong people, and self-control. In other words they should see that you are the captain of your boat, and you are a capable one at that. You can be happy for as long as you trust in yourself. Also, if you trust yourself your confidence levels would improve, you would get a stronger perspective on life, and develop the feeling of belonging and loyalty to your family. If you fail to derive sufficient trust despite all you do, if your parents have sky-high expectations about you, having a frank talk with your parents would be a good idea. Doing so, however, you should watch the tone of your voice, and avoid assuming a judgmental and accusatory perspective on them, if you want to avoid new problems. However, you should not confuse your parents' trust in you and the freedom they grant to you with irresponsible attitudes. You should be aware of the distinction, and should not push for more than fair.

If your choice of friends pose a problem with your family, sharing and talking about this problem with your parents, extending an ear for their experience would be a major step in the direction of a solution.

Candid communications is the element which minimizes conflict within the family and contributes to the solution of numerous problems. Never forget that constructive dialog can overcome many problems.

### **Specific and Reasonable Limits Should be Set**

Your parents may impose more control than necessary, with a view to protecting you. They may want to know the contents of your drawers or your internet browsing history. Such behavior can be understandable up to a point. However, they should not cross certain limits and act as a policeman. They should, instead, prefer solutions based on communication, where necessary. Otherwise, an individual who feels that everything she does is subject to scrutiny,

and that she is not entitled to any privacy, would believe that she is not trusted, and would feel uncomfortable and unhappy.

Assuming that your parents suffered from hardships during their childhood, they may be guided by the will “let my child have these things I did not have”, and thus give you everything, without demanding any act on your part. But such an attitude would pose its own share of troubles as well. For instance, your mother would complain about how disorganized you are. Yet, she probably didn’t give you any chance to tidy up your room, doing the job herself instead. This led to a failure on your part to learn about responsibilities. Here, what is needed is to sensibly share responsibilities, in an environment where the parents make love as well as a sweet amount of discipline felt.

Your parents should be careful about their style as well, in their endeavors to build discipline within the family. For, a dictating attitude, employed all the time, would eat your self-confidence away. Even though what they say may be true, such lectures have other problematic aspects as well. Words bearing the message “your emotions and ideas are not important. I know what is best.” can make you feel rejected as an individual, leading to a tendency to do the opposite. However, if your parents opt to serve as models and instill ideas in you, instead of issuing orders, you won’t develop such negative emotions.

You can choose the one you found most appropriate among the ideas presented to you, and proceed to apply it, and learn by doing and witnessing both the positive and negative consequences. Some parents also have a tendency to issue threats with a view to protecting the child from dangers and evil; such an attitude should also be avoided.

### **It’s All Good, But...**

Some families may suffer from conflicts despite the existence of love and goodwill. A glance at such families reveals that the problem is not about what the individuals say during a conflict, but about how they say it. Perhaps one of the parties may have spoken a bit loud, or may have mentioned it at a very wrong time, wording the concern in a less than optimal way. Most kids watching a football

game may have felt the annoyance of the words “go and study your books” uttered by his father.

An indicator of insufficient communications and sharing within the family is the amount of appreciation the individuals feel in the family household. You should be able to tell yourself “I am appreciated and my ideas are respected in this family. I feel valuable.” If you don’t feel that way, and instead feel worthless, this may be a result of a misunderstanding or excessive expectations on your part, or due to the existence of a psychological wall erected between you and your parents.

Your family is your first school in life. The insights inscribed on the core of your brain during the early years of your life would, in time, act as the seeds of a great tree, shaping your whole life. That is why you should resolve any conflicts with your parents. If you question yourselves as the members of the family, and try to change yourself instead of changing the other person, embracing an open mind for innovation and learning, you can have a family life where peace and trust are supreme.

*You should always remember that uncertainty really damages trust, and you can easily increase others’ trust in you by simply eliminating uncertainties.*



## **HONESTY OR LIES?**

Compared to just a century ago, today lies are employed much more frequently. Lies are starting to gain ground in the face of honesty. Honesty is a natural characteristic all people should have. Yet, today it is deemed a rare virtue. The need for trustworthy people is now being felt ever more strongly, in every domain of life, including but not limited to business life. People with ill-will don't hesitate to label the honest ones as "suckers".

Given the acceptance lies get in daily lives, today our societies are dominated by a feeling of distrust. In families, the spouses no longer trust each other without question. Even the most developed countries engage in major investments in arms and defense industry, as they don't trust the other countries. If we want to build healthy societies composed of healthy individuals, we should reverse this trend without delay, prevent lies from bringing returns, and once again build up the lost values of humanity, starting with honesty.

### **How Did We End up Here?**

By the end of the 20th century, some began to voice the argument that the world does not need morals, and that ethics is not a scientific category. In this perspective, man was deemed inherently honest and ethical, thus ethical teachings and advice were redundant.

Many liberal thinkers took this one step further and began to claim even ethics itself, let alone advice and teachings, is not needed, as it was but an obstacle for economic activity and consumption. The assumptions and values of the people were thus transformed. The dictum "material earnings and production are all that matter. Lies for this goal are acceptable" was shoved down their throats. The

foundations of the collapse of ethics we are going through today, thus, were laid down in those years.

Lies found fertile ground especially in politics. Today, politicians use lies in liberal doses with the fear “I cannot be reelected if I tell the truth” or Machiavellian attitudes such as “People in general are not honest; why should I be? If I don’t lie while the majority does, I cannot stay afloat in politics.” Such a perspective leads to the disassociation of political correctness from ethical correctness, and to severe shocks felt by the people.

### **Oppression Invite Lies**

In environments where severe oppression is ever present and where people cannot express their thoughts freely, lies are rather common occurrences. Put differently, in democratic settings people resort to lies less frequently, as they are not afraid to voice their views freely. The same applies for the families as well. To sustain trust, the individuals should assume a democratic outlook, and a democratic structure should be embraced within the family.

Three attributes tell if the members of the family are democrats or not. The first one is about a libertarian attitude, and openness to criticism. Such a person would not get angry in the face of criticism, for she is well aware that criticism is healthy. The second attribute is pluralism –respect for different opinions. The third, in turn, avoiding authoritarian and despotic attitudes. People who are not democrats in heart, but instead authoritarian personalities, are often seen forcing their views on others. Faced with an unfavorable case, these people assume a defensive stance, and start lying.

The development of an oppressive environment within the family would lead not just to lying and deception, but also force individuals into secrecy in some of their endeavors, and the development of passive-aggressive reactions such as being cross at each other. For instance, a child who is pressured into studying by his father may just open up her book and pretend to study, but refuses to read the text even for once. When she duly gets a less than stellar grade, she would witness the reaction from her father, and enjoys that reaction. The development of such a passive-aggressive reaction on part of the kid is a result of the pressure applied by her father.

*Like any kid, you see your role models in your parents. You parents should avoid lies and act honestly, to be worthy models for you.*

### **Your Parent Should Serve as a Model for You**

There is this story of a father taking his two kids to the zoo. One of the kids is 6 years old, the other is 7. The ticket officer says that 0-6 years old kids get free admission, while 7 years and older need a ticket. The father responds, “one free admission, one ticket then.” The officer gets a surprised look and says “I wouldn’t know that one of the kids needed a ticket if you didn’t say so. Why did you tell me that?” The father’s answer is interesting and telling: “Perhaps you don’t know the ages of my children; but they do.” Thanks to this behavior on part of their father, the children get an unforgettable lesson telling them lies simply are not an option.

Like any kid, you see your role models in your parents. You parents should avoid lies and act honestly, to be worthy models for you. Whenever you tell a lie, they should talk to you and tell you that is a mistake.

Think about a little kid, dropping the on the table, and breaking it. Despite holding one piece of the vase, she tells her mother that she did not break the vase. In that case, the mother focusing on the act of breaking the vase and shouting her “how can you break that vase!” is not the right way to go. She should tell her kid “You may have broken the vase, that is a mistake. But you also told me something that was not true, and that is completely another mistake. But as mistakes go, lying is much graver than breaking the vase.” and make her understand that lying would not bring any benefits. Receiving such a message, the kid would understand that her mother’s affections would be forthcoming as long as she acts honestly. Getting angry with the kid and lecturing her for hours about honesty, in turn, would not make her stop with lying.

### **If Telling the Truth Is Inconvenient**

Of course, just like any other person, telling the truth should be your guiding principle. But you should not forget that all truths are not meant to be told just anywhere. Some issues may prevent someone from telling the truth. For instance, telling a jealous husband that

his wife was seen with someone else may lead to a major fight in that family. In such cases, the right course of action is to keep one's mouth shut, or seeking another solution without resorting to violence.

At times, you may inadvertently voice statements which do not reflect the truth. For instance, despite not feeling so well, you may automatically respond "I'm fine" to someone asking how you are. Or you may put a smiling face on at the school or work, even though you are unhappy inside. That may not be the most honest answer of all, but it rather represents a wish or a desire to be fine. Communication experts refer to these cases as "role-play". Moreover, it is only natural to assume a serious tone in your behavior at the workplace, and a sincere one in your household. Acting in line with the prevalent conditions is not deception and dishonesty.

### **Avoid Gossip**

Gossip is not just about voicing the negative features of the person who is the object of gossip. It also entails a degree of imagination, comprising a fictional element and some lies as well. As a consequence, it leads to communication accidents. To avoid such accidents, you should stay away from gossiping, and learn to think before talking. Otherwise, you would hurt not only yourself but the people around you.

The gains, success and happiness brought by lies are all short-term. Honesty, in turn, would bring you long-term gains, success and happiness. But perhaps more importantly, it allows you to hold your head high. Being a honorable and principled person is more important than anything else.

## **YOUTH AND FREEDOM**

The past century witnessed many serious debates about freedom. Humanity moved from the age of serfdom to the age of labor, followed, more recently, by the age of freedom. In the 60s, however, some movements like those standing against marriage or religion, or those demanding sexual freedom, took the libertarian trend to the extreme. However, the decades since revealed some of the worst consequences of such movements. The debate on the actual essence on freedom, on the other hand, has yet to be settled.

### **Freedom Arguments**

Various arguments were made about the definition of freedom. For instance, capitalist thinkers claim that individuals should be able to think without limits, provided that they do not pose harm on others. In case of actions, they tend to think that the individuals should be free as long as they do not harm or stand in the way of others, once some general rules are set to govern the social life. However, such an attitude would bring a further set of questions: Should someone taking a hunger strike be left to her fate, as she took the act on her own free will? Should driving in a dangerous way be allowed? Should the parents be allowed to leave their children hungry, should they wish so?

Socialist thought, in its turn, has its own definition of freedom. In that perspective, the ability to act as required, and decide based on knowledge is freedom. But defining what is required is a task reserved for the Communist Party alone. The greatest freedom is about implementing the ideas and requirements provided by the Party, in a

perfect manner. The ones who do not abide by these requirements, on the other hand, are mentally ill.

The religions, on the other hand, define freedom as the ability of man to act as he wishes, provided that he does not forget he's but a servant of God. In Quran, where the belief in just one God is supreme, the emphasis on free will granted to man is explicit. The man is even granted the freedom to act in rebellion to the God. But in the dialectic that sees an exam in life, the consequences of such rebellion should be taken into account, and the applicable price should be paid.

It is evident that every perspective on freedom has its limitations. Given the lack of an action to affect others, the major question demanding a response is not about what freedom is, but about its extent.

### **Freedom is the Key to Production**

Freedom is one of the elements enhancing the motivation of man. In human brain, it activates not only the areas concerning the feeling of trust, but also the areas seeking exploration and discoveries. In the US, burning the flag does not provoke much reaction. Yet, someone who says "I don't respect human rights" is doomed to isolation. Such a philosophy ensures that man is free, and thus provides opportunity for the development of his skills. It is not a coincidence that most inventions today are brought about in the United States.

### **Is It Necessary to Abide by the Rules of the Society?**

The democratic systems are marked by a mutual understanding between the society and the government, and are based on consent.

In such systems, the people feel free, and can question the rulers. There is room for and the presence of opposition. The freedom to voice different opinions is respected. But such opinions should be voiced in a civilized manner. In societies where the culture of debate is well-established, the clash between different ideas is pretty important as it would lead to facts.

Comparable to the rules applicable in a football game, and the players' obligation to abide by such rules, the individuals, in turn, are under obligation to comply with the rules of the society and the country in their daily lives. However, when setting the rules, the rul-

ers should not go to extremes. The rules should not pose a nuisance for people, similar to the discomfort given by a simple horse fly. To the contrary, living rules open to change should be established, to make life easier if observed, contributing to the development of man without completely ruling out failure. Rules to set limits on people and entrepreneurship, damaging motivation, would not be good for anyone.

### **Freedom in Education**

Freedom in education is another matter worthy of note. The students are most interested in the courses where fun and excitement, rather than oppressive and excessively disciplined teachers dominate. The ideal is to combine fun and discipline together in the classes. The teachers should employ their pedagogic skills to combine the two. With the courses which achieve this goal, the students will not only learn the topics easier, but also remember them for a longer period.

When asked the secret of her success, a retired teacher whose students reached to really important positions said, 'first of all, the students should like the course'. And for a student to like the course, she should love her teacher. And the teacher should love her students as well. The student would feel safe and free in such an environment of love, and would learn better.

### **Is There Room for Punishment?**

Failure to abide by the limits may lead to the imposition of various punishments in accordance with the system in place. The crucial issue, in this context, is to make sure that punishment is not about making one suffer, but about teaching a lesson. When applied, punishment should make the subject gain something. The crime and the punishment should also be linked in terms of proportion as well as causality. In case the subject of punishment thinks that the process is unfair, the punishment would not do any good.

In the same vein, motivation through rewards is a better match for human nature, compared to punishments. When a person commits good and bad, focusing on the good, reinforcing what is positive, is a good idea. For instance, if your teacher focuses on what you did, rather than what you didn't, she would be able to guide you towards

better outcomes. And you, in your turn, would like to repeat such good in the future.

*To overcome your wants, you should develop a certain internal discipline and self-control, and should establish a balance between your needs and wants.*

### **Freedom Should be Learned during Childhood**

Numerous studies show that knowledge acquired up to age 6 are more extensive compared to what one learns afterwards. One learns how to sit and get up, how to laugh and speak, colors, numbers, insight into human relationships, values, concepts, and much more in the first 6 years of life. In education based on the brain, these years are put under the limelight, with a special focus on how the child is treated in this time frame, what kind of opportunities are provided to her, and to what extent the child felt herself to be free.

When left to their natural state, people are always inclined to do whatever they want. You can spend a huge sum by shopping as you wish.

But you should never forget that doing whatever you want entails some risks of its own as well. To overcome your wants, you should develop a certain internal discipline and self-control, and should establish a balance between your needs and wants.

The philosophy and values regarding freedom play a major part in shaping the future. If you develop the skill to manage yourself well, you would commit lesser mistakes, and avoid spending your time in vain. So, you would not need to spend your years to fix the mistakes you have committed today. That is why you should get a strong understanding and accurate interpretation of freedom.



## **YOUTH AND VIOLENCE**

As a global trend, violence among students in particular is on the rise in recent years. Even among young kids, disputes and arguments can run out of control, leading to cases of wounding or murder. Indeed, man is naturally inclined to violence. Since the prehistoric times, it is evident that man is a hunter by character: He ventures out, hunts some food, brings the hunt home, with a view to sustaining life there. To do so, however, he needs to use violence. Among the women, on the other hand, motherhood is the predominant feeling. The mother is not one to laugh in the face of fear. Her nature is one to protect her child from dangerous animals.

Biological inclinations play a major part –but not the only one– in the development of the feeling of violence. That feeling is also reinforced through social learning. In societies where it is approved, and is accepted as a method to solve problems, violence is even more commonplace. The education policies which the Western world introduced from the 1960s on serve as a proof to this point. According to this perspective of education influenced by Darwinist struggle for life, the recognition and acceptance of violence would trigger a change, bringing about some kind of an order in the end. But the expectations proved unrealistic, with the education policy effectively rendering schools nests of crime.

The contribution of the family is also undeniable in raising individuals with an inclination towards violence and a level of toleration for violence. If, in a household, everybody speaks loudly, engages in fights, throwing things to each other, the child would not have to wander far to learn about violence.

The child would see a model of anger in her very loud father, and will thus start to shout at her mother and father. She will even have her toys shout at each other during her games.

### **Violence in Adolescence**

The years of adolescence are effectively the ones in which the young individual has an open ear for violence, with matching willingness to embrace it. In those years, the individual is usually irritable and impulsive. Your reactions would strike a violence chord, trying the limits. Expressions such as “people like these need a lesson! This is nothing that cannot be fixed with a good old gallows!” are common utterances in those years. The first feeling one gets in the face of some troubling development is violence. This particularly the case for the boys. Yet, acting on the first whim you have is always a recipe for more trouble.

There is a correlation between the genre of music you listen, and violence. Your brain would have a virtual dance with the music, slowing or accelerating the chemical reactions in the brain in tune with the music. In this context, the feelings of anger and aggressiveness would be activated or reduced with the help of music. That is why it pays to be reasonable when choosing the genres of music one listens. On the other hand, music that feeds emotions such as fervor, thrill, or aggressiveness have the capacity to make you sacrifice yourself.

### **Violence Among the Spouses**

The mind of men and women work in different ways. When a woman feels bad, and is depressed for some reason, she would express those feelings by crying. Men, on the other hand, express their feelings through violence. These are the biological tendencies of each gender. If the individual, regardless of his or her gender, can grow into someone mature, he or she can control the impulse for rage or crying.

Violence in the household usually takes the form of violence committed by man on woman, given the former's inclination to express his emotions through rage. Woman, on the other hand, would abandon the behavior that led to such a reaction from the man, and does not repeat it again. The first few incidents leads to such a validation of violence committed by the man, whereupon he gets

convinced that violence is a means to solve problems, because it leads to the results he desires. That is why the first incident of violence in any household is the most crucial one. Even if the victim of violence cannot speak up against it at the time it occurred for the first time, she definitely should make the perpetrator feel and understand that such a behavior is not acceptable. Doing so will lead to the feelings of guilt and regret on part of the perpetrator, and violence will not get roots in the household.

There are some cases where mutual violence is inflicted by each gender on the other one. Ignoring the importance of such events would lead to the internalization of violence as a valid method. The thought “if he commits violence on you, then you should commit violence on him as well” would destroy a marriage. Instead of reacting to violence through further violence, one should embrace a perspective focused on solutions, and think “how can I solve this problem?”

### **Violence is the Indicator of Failure**

Violence can be considered a solution among people who are unable to express their feelings in words. Even though the perpetrator of violence pretends to be strong, he actually is not. To the contrary, violence is the last resort in the face of failure and inability. In a household, authority can be built through reason and persuasive skills, rather than through violence.

In both teenage years, as well as in the subsequent parts of one's life, in order not to fall for the urge for violence, you should also think a lot about your actions and the consequences they will lead to. Indeed, violence is often an impulsive behavior.

To prevent resort to violence, you should teach your brain the method for quick analysis, act on the basis of a solid analysis in the face of developments, and ask yourself the question “this is what I feel, OK; but how should I act?”

Never forget that the coolheaded people who manage others are the ones capable of such an analysis. People who reached to executive positions in their careers had also committed many mistakes during their childhood. But these people reached to their current positions by using their skills to draw conclusions from these mistakes, undoing the damage done, and developing themselves through the process. If

you want to achieve success in the coming years, you should take this into account, and create opportunities out of your mistakes. If you are inclined to violence, you should change and improve yourself, putting this problem in the past as soon as possible.

*Even though the perpetrator of violence pretends to be strong, he actually is not. To the contrary, violence is the last resort in the face of failure and inability. In a household, authority can be built through reason and persuasive skills, rather than through violence.*