

American Inspiration



American Weekly Inspiration

Thoughts for today and every day:

“Keep your heart open for as long as you can, as wide as you can, for others and especially for yourself.” Morrie Schwartz (1916-1995) Educator

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“We are changed by what we read. Close that book, and you are not the same person anymore. Because of what you just read, your worldview, your understanding, your compassion for others, your ability to engage intelligently with others, has expanded a little. Books help us grow.” Pat Williams

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“Man’s capacity for justice makes democracy possible, but man’s inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary.” Reinhold Nieburh (1892-1971) theologian and historian

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“You cannot fly like an eagle with wings like a wren.” William Henry Hudson (1841-1922) naturalist and writer

American Update:

Thank goodness for a little cool air making its way across the plains this week. There is nothing like the crisp air to get you in the spirit for a Friday night football game. I hope that cool breezes and tranquil evenings and making their way to you.

With the cool nights ahead, many of the students are ready to wear their letterman jackets. If they have not already ordered patches from camp or contest, they can download the order form at www.danceadts.com/pdf/studentorderform.pdf. Patches are mailed the same day the order is received.

Looking for rhinestones to dress up your costumes or uniforms? The best prices and quality source is Rhinestones Unlimited (www.rhinestonesu.com). Have your

team 'bling' their team t-shirts for practice before tackling their contest costumes this winter.

Directors, are you wanting to plan your contest budget for 2008? Log onto the Directors Corner to view the contest fees for 2008. If you have forgotten your username or password, just call the office or e-mail directly to this e-mail and we can reset your name. If you have not already made your hotel reservations for contest, make sure to book right away. Several hotels are already sold out for some of the larger contests. We hope to see you in 2008!

Inspiration of the Week:

Excerpted from **The Seven Pillars of Confidence**

Self-assurance is an attitude you can develop by learning to see obstacles
as opportunities

by **Lauren Picker**
Condensed from *Self*

Anxiety and fear of failure are stumbling blocks that you can overcome. Along the way, you boost your self-confidence. "I can't give you confidence," Walter Anderson says, "but I can give you tools." With Anderson's tools, you can build a brave new you constructed upon the following Seven Pillars of Confidence, the basic architecture of the healthy self.

1. Accept Responsibility. Finding self-confidence requires accepting responsibility for your own happiness, and recognizing that you are a product not only of your genetic code and your environment, but of the choices you make. I am responsible. "When you begin with these three words," says Anderson, "you can not only begin a new life, but you can also create a new world."

2. Make Anxiety Your Ally. You're starting down a nail biter deadline or, you have to make an important presentation. You're so terrified that you can hardly sleep. What if everyone thinks that your ideas are insane? What if you experience rejection?

Understand that what you are experiencing is not fear, but anxiety. Fear, Anderson point out, is a response to a clear and present danger, such as a mugger holding a knife to your throat. Anxiety is the response to an anticipated danger. The differences: Fear ends as the danger passes. "With anxiety," says Anderson, "it's endless."

But anxiety arms you with the very weapons you need to defeat it: energy, heightened awareness and sharpened sense. Rather than wasting all that nervous energy and mental acuity on worry, use it to solve the stress inducing problem. You'll wind up reassuring yourself. "Nothing dissipates anxiety more quickly than action," says Anderson. Also, ask yourself what's the worst thing that could happen. Usually, the worst case scenario isn't all that devastating.

3. Compete to Improve Yourself. If confidence flows only from a belief that you can run faster,

dance better or earn more money, your self esteem will be as fragile as an eggshell. There will always be someone who can outdo you. Competition can, however, give confidence a lift—if the goal is to improve yourself, not to beat someone else.

4. Recognize That Mistakes Are Opportunities. Making a big mistake can hurt, but it needn't sink your self assurance. A humiliating gaff can be a learning experience—a confidence enhancer.

To take advantage of your mistakes, Anderson suggests using his R.I.P theory. The acronym stands for responsibility, insight and perspective. The secret is to let your mistakes rest in peace.

Take responsibility for your errors. In other words, don't ignore a mistake; learn from it. Gain insight from your errors. Don't torment yourself or grow obsessive over a mistake.

Keep the setback in perspective. Most mistakes are not personal tragedies; rather they are problems you now have the opportunity to solve. "Success," Anderson adds, "is often a string of failed attempts to get it right."

5. Be Brave. Confidence is born of experience. And getting that experience often means forging ahead—even if your heart is in your mouth. "Courage is acting in spite of fear," notes Anderson, who served in the Vietnam War. "If the challenge is worth it, you're supposed to be nervous."

So you feel more like the Cowardly Lion than Indiana Jones? To steady those knocking knees, Anderson suggests that you adopt an idea from the Delancey Street Foundation, a rehabilitation program for criminals in San Francisco. The fundamental principle is: Act As If. Former convicts are told to act as if they care about other people—even if they don't. They actually begin to develop empathy.

So act as if you're brave and, before long, you won't be just acting—you will feel courageous. "Act As If forces you to focus on solutions," says Anderson. "When you ask yourself, 'How do I act as if I'm brave? How do I act as if I'm confident?' You're focusing on solutions because those answers will provide them."

6. Be Ambitious. If you put a flea in a jar with the lid on, the flea hops up and down, bumping up against the lid until it learns to jump only so high. "Each of us is somewhat like that," Anderson explains. The important thing is not to let barriers or setbacks limit your ambitions. You are not a flea. You know what you're capable of doing—keep leaping as high as you can.

When setting goals, remember that you are distinct from what you have and what you seem to be. If you let others define who you are, you may not find happiness. Pursue your own dreams—not your mother's or your best friend's.

7. Take Risks. Risk taking builds confidence, but it has a price: losses. There are three kinds of risk related losses. The positive loss is a loss of innocence or ignorance. This happens when you acknowledge that you are not satisfied with what you have—be it a dead-end job or a floundering relationship. The practical loss is what we give up to get ahead. For instance, when you go away to college, you lose the comfort of home. The potential loss is when you take a risk and lose.

When considering any risk:

- ❖ **Define a clear goal.**
- ❖ **Review the positive, practical and potential losses.**
- ❖ **Determine whether the risk is one of trust, identity or something larger. When you focus on risks that have a larger purpose, you can't go wrong. "Even if the risk doesn't turn out as you hoped it would, you will gain from it," says Anderson.**
- ❖ **Act. Take a risk. Be confident—you have earned it.**

*Walter Anderson, author of **Courage Is a Three Letter Word** and **The Greatest Risk of All**, confidence is not something as elusive and slippery as mercury. It's an attitude that you can develop.*

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