

## • Do SMALL ACTS OF KINDNESS

I remember reading a statement by a psychiatrist who said that if you're feeling depressed, the best thing to do is to do something for someone else. Why? Because it gets you focused outward, not inward. It's hard to be depressed while helping someone else. Ironically, a by-product of serving others is feeling wonderful yourself.

I remember sitting in an airport one day, waiting for my flight. I was excited because I'd been upgraded to first-class. And in first class the flight attendants are nicer, the food is edible, and there's room to stretch your legs so they're not curled up like a pretzel. In fact, I had the best seat on the entire plane. Seat 1A. Before boarding, I noticed a young lady who had several carry-on bags and was holding a crying baby. Having just finished reading a book on doing random acts of kindness, I heard my conscience speak to me, "You scumbag. Let her have your ticket." I fought these promptings for a while but eventually caved in:



"Excuse me, but you look like you could use this first-class ticket more than me. I know how hard it can be flying with kids. Why don't you let me trade you tickets?"

"Are you sure?"

"Oh yeah. I really don't mind. I'm just going to be working the whole time, anyway."

"Well, thank you. That's very kind of you," she said, as we swapped tickets.

As we boarded the plane, I was surprised at how good it made me feel to watch her sit down in seat 1A. In fact, under the circumstances, sitting way back near the bathrooms didn't seem that bad at all. At one point during the flight I was so curious to see how she was doing that I got up out of my seat, walked to the first-class section, and peeked in through the curtain that separates first class from coach. There she was with her baby, both asleep in big and comfortable seat 1A. And I felt like a million bucks. *Cha-ching*. I've got to keep doing this kind of thing. 

This sweet story shared by a teen named Tawni is another example of the joy of service:

*There is a girl in our neighborhood who lives in a duplex with her parents, and they don't have a lot of money. For the past three years, when I grew out of my clothes, me and my mom took them over to her. I'd say something like "I thought you might like these," or "I'd like to see you wearing this."*

*When she wore something I gave her, I'd think it was really cool. She would say, "Thank you so much for the new*

shirt." I'd reply, "That color looks really good on you!" I tried to be sensitive so that I didn't make her feel bad, or give her the impression that I thought she was poor. It makes me feel good, knowing that I'm helping her have a better life.



Go out of your way to invite the kid who sits alone in class out with you and your friends. Write an email or thank-you note to someone who has made a difference in your life, like a friend, a teacher, or a coach. The next time you're at a tollbooth, pay for the car behind you. Giving gives life not only to others but also to yourself. I love these lines from *The Man Nobody Knows* by Bruce Barton, which illustrate this point so well:

*There are two seas in Palestine. One is fresh, and fish are in it. Splashes of green adorn its banks. Trees spread their branches over it and stretch out their thirsty roots to sip of its healing waters.*

*The River Jordan makes this sea with sparkling water from the hills. So it laughs in the sunshine. And men build their houses near to it, and birds their nests; and every kind of life is happier because it is there.*

*The River Jordan flows on south into another sea.*

*Here is no splash of fish, no fluttering leaf, no song of birds, no children's laughter. Travelers choose another route, unless on urgent business. The air hangs heavy above its water, and neither man nor beast nor fowl will drink.*

*What makes this mighty difference in these neighbor seas? Not the River Jordan. It empties the same good water into both. Not the soil in which they lie; not in the country round about.*

*This is the difference. The Sea of Galilee receives but does not keep the Jordan. For every drop that flows into it another drop flows out. The giving and receiving go on in equal measure.*

*The other sea is shrewder, hoarding its income jealously. It will not be tempted into any generous impulse. Every drop it gets, it keeps.*

*The Sea of Galilee gives and lives. This other sea gives nothing. It is named the Dead.*

*There are two kinds of people in this world. There are two seas in Palestine.*

## • **BE GENTLE WITH YOURSELF**

Being gentle means many things. It means not expecting yourself to be perfect by tomorrow morning. If you're a late bloomer, as many of us are, be patient and allow yourself enough time to grow.

It means learning to laugh at the stupid things you do. I have a friend Chuck who's extraordinary when it comes to laughing at himself and never taking life too seriously. I've always been amazed at how his upbeat attitude attracts people to him, almost magnetically.

Being gentle also means forgiving yourself when you mess up. And who hasn't done that? We should learn from our mistakes, but we shouldn't beat ourselves up over them. The past is just that, past. Consider what went wrong and why. Learn, and make amends if you need to. Then drop it and move on. Throw that voodoo doll out with the trash.

"One of the keys to happiness," says Rita Mae Brown, "is a bad memory."

A ship at sea for many years picks up thousands of barnacles that attach themselves to the bottom of the ship and eventually weigh it down, becoming a threat to its safety. The easiest way to get rid of them is for the ship to harbor in a freshwater port, free of salt water. Here, the barnacles loosen on their own and fall off. The ship is then able to return to sea, relieved of its burden.

Are you carrying around barnacles in the form of mistakes, regrets, and pain from the past? Perhaps you need to allow yourself to soak in fresh water for a while. Hit the refresh button. Letting go of a burden and giving yourself a second chance may just be the deposit you need right now.





Always be a first-rate version of yourself, instead of a second-rate version of somebody else.

JUDY GARLAND SINGER-ACTRESS

As Bruno Mars sings, “Life’s too short to have regrets. . . . Only have one life to live, so you better make the best of it.”

## • **BE HONEST**

I Googled the word *honest* the other day and these are a few of the related words I found: upstanding, incorruptible, moral, principled, truth-loving, steadfast, true, real, right, good, straight-shooting, genuine. Not a bad set of words to be associated with, don’t you think?

Honesty comes in many forms. First there’s self-honesty. When people look at you, do they see the genuine article or do you appear through smoke and mirrors? I find that if I’m ever fake and try to be something I’m not, I feel unsure of myself and make a PBA withdrawal. I love how singer Judy Garland put it, “Always be a first-rate version of yourself, instead of a second-rate version of somebody else.”

Then there’s honesty in our actions. If you’ve been dishonest in the past, and I think we all have, try being honest, and notice how whole it makes you feel. It’s a relief not to hide who you are, or to have to cover up your actions. This goes for your Internet persona, too. Just because people can’t see you directly doesn’t mean you can lie—after all, *you’ll* know you’re not telling the truth. Remember, you can’t do wrong and feel right. This story by Jeff is a good example of that:



*In my sophomore year, there were three kids in my geometry class who didn’t do well in math. I was really good at it. I’d charge them three dollars for each test that I helped them pass. The tests were multiple-choice, so I’d write on a little tiny piece of paper all the right answers, and hand them off.*

*At first I felt like I was making money, kind of a nice job. I wasn’t thinking about how it could hurt all of us. After a while I realized I shouldn’t do that anymore, because they weren’t learning anything, and it would only get harder down the road. Cheating certainly wasn’t helping me.*



It takes courage to be honest when people all around you seem to be getting away with cheating on tests, lying to their parents, and stealing from work. But, remember, every act of honesty is a deposit into your PBA and will build strength. As the saying goes, “My strength

is as the strength of ten because my heart is pure.” Honesty is always the best policy, even when it may not be popular.

## • RENEW YOURSELF

You’ve gotta take time for yourself, to renew and to relax. If you don’t you’ll get burned-out and lose your zest for life.

It seems like half the planet has seen the movie *Avatar*, the highest grossing film of all time. Why was it so successful? Besides groundbreaking special effects and great filmmaking, I believe the story hits home because we all need to practice what it’s preaching.

The story takes place in the year 2154 on Pandora, a forested moon in the Alpha Centauri star system, and revolves around the character of Jake Sully, a former Marine, now paralyzed, confined to a wheelchair, trapped and unfulfilled. Being able to mentally live through his “avatar”—a 10-foot tall replica of the planet’s blue natives, he at first feels alive because he can run and enjoy a working body, even if only in his mind. But it quickly becomes much more than that. Meeting the natives, Jake falls in love with Neytiri, a female Na’vi native. The more time he spends with Neytiri and her people, the more he comes to see the beauty and peace and power of their world—a world Jake’s loud, natural-resource-thirsty humans have come to pillage and plunder.

The message for us here is about rejuvenation, about unplugging, about taking time to listen to the natural world around us. It’s about putting yourself in a self-imposed *time-out* once in a while.

Now you don’t have to become a 10-foot-tall semi-human blue dude in order to find peace, but like Jake Sully, finding your own place to escape to, your own sanctuary of some kind, is essential. Go sit somewhere and ponder the clouds. Find a tree stump and listen to the wind or birds or maybe even the beating of your own heart. If you don’t have access to a big cool glowing Tree of Souls like Jake, maybe you can find a rooftop, a park bench, some piece of grass somewhere, just a place to be alone. Now all this might sound a bit hokey, but trust me, humans today live in a constant storm of stuff and we all need to take a deep breath and unplug occasionally, just to renew our spirits.

Theodore, from Canada, had his hideout:



*Whenever I'd get too stressed out, or when I wasn't getting along with my parents, I'd just go into the basement. There I had a hockey stick, a ball, and a bare concrete wall on which I could take out my frustrations. I'd just shoot the*

ball for half an hour and go back upstairs refreshed. It did wonders for my hockey game, but it was even better for my family relationships.



Arian told me about his refuge. Whenever he got too stressed out, he would slip into his high school's large auditorium through a back door. All alone in the quiet, dark, and spacious auditorium, he could get away from all the hustle and bustle, have a good cry, or just relax.

Allison found a garden all her own:

*My dad died in an industrial accident at work when I was little. I really don't know the details because I've always been afraid to ask my mother very many questions about it. Maybe it's because I've created this perfect picture of him in my mind that I don't want to change. To me he's this perfect human being who would protect me if he were here. He's with me all the time in my thoughts, and I imagine how he would act and help me if he was here.*

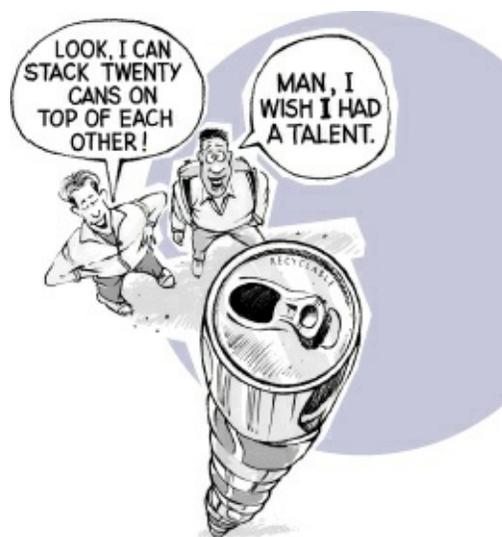
*When I really need him I go to the top of the slide at the local grade school playground. I have this silly feeling that if I can go to the highest place I will be able to feel him. So I climb up to the top of the slide and just lie there. I talk to him in my thoughts and I can feel him talking to my mind. I want him to touch me, but of course know that he cannot. I go there every time something really is bothering me and I just share my burdens with him.*

Besides finding a place of refuge, there are so many other ways to renew yourself and build your PBA. Exercise can do it, like going for a walk, running, dancing, or kickboxing. Some teens have suggested watching old movies, talking to friends who crack you up, or recording music and making videos on your computer. Others have found that writing in their journals helps them cope.

Habit 7, Sharpen the Saw, is all about taking time to renew your body, heart, mind, and soul. We'll talk more about it when we get there. So hold your horses.

## • **MAGNIFY YOUR TALENTS**

Finding and then developing a talent, hobby, or passion can be one of the single greatest deposits you can make into your PBA.



Why is it that when we think of talents we think in terms of the “traditional” high-profile talents, such as the athlete, dancer, or award-winning scholar? The truth is, talents come in a variety of packages. Don't think small. You may have a knack for reading, writing, or speaking. You may have a gift for rhythm, being hilarious, remembering details, or being accepting of others. You may have organizational, musical, or leadership skills. It doesn't matter where your talent may lie, whether it's chess, drama, or skateboarding, when you do

something you like doing and have a talent for—it's exhilarating. It's a form of self-expression. And as this girl attests, it builds esteem.

*You might die laughing when I tell you that I have a real talent and love for weeds. And I'm not talking about the kind you smoke but weeds and flowers that grow everywhere. I realized that I always noticed them, while others just wanted them cut down.*

*So I started picking them and pressing them—and eventually making beautiful pictures and postcards and art objects with them. I have been able to cheer many a sad soul with one of these personalized cards. I'm often asked to do arrangements of flowers for others and to share my knowledge of preserving pressed plants. It's given me so much joy and confidence—just knowing I have the special gift and appreciation for something most people ignore. But it even goes beyond that—it's taught me that if there's so much to just simple weeds, how much more is there to almost everything else in life? It's made me look deeper. It makes me an explorer.* 

My brother-in-law Bryce told me how developing a talent helped build his self-confidence and find a career in which he could make a difference. His story is set in the Teton mountain range that stretches high above the plains of Idaho and Wyoming. The Grand Teton, the tallest of the Teton peaks, juts 13,776 feet above sea level.

As a young boy, Bryce had the picture-perfect baseball swing. Until his tragic accident. While playing with a BB gun one day, Bryce accidentally shot himself in the eye. Fearing that surgery might permanently impair his vision, the doctors left the BB in his eye.

Months later, when Bryce returned to baseball, he began striking out each time at bat. He had lost his depth perception and much of his vision in one eye and could no longer judge the ball. Said Bryce, "I was an all-star player the year before and now I couldn't hit the ball. I was convinced that I would never be able to do anything again. It was a big blow to my confidence."

Bryce's two older brothers were good at so many things, and he wondered what he could do now, given his new handicap. Since he lived near the Tetons he decided to give climbing a try. So he dropped by the local Army store and bought nylon rope, carabiners, chocks, pitons, and other climbing necessities. He checked out climbing books and studied how to tie knots, hook up a harness, and rappel. His first real climbing experience was rappelling off his friend's chimney. Soon he began climbing some of the smaller peaks surrounding the Grand Teton.

Bryce soon realized that he had a knack for it. Unlike many of his climbing partners, his body was strong and lightweight and seemed to be perfectly built for rock climbing.

After training for several months, Bryce finally climbed the Grand Teton all by himself. It took him two days. Reaching this goal gave him a massive confidence boost.

He'd drive to the Tetons, run up to the base of the climb, do the climb, and run back down. Bryce got faster and stronger every time. Bryce's friend Kim noticed how seriously he took climbing, and told him, "Hey, you ought to go after the record on the Grand Teton."

Kim told Bryce all about it. A climbing ranger named Jock Glidden had set a record on the Grand by running to the top and back in four hours and eleven minutes. *That's absolutely impossible*, thought Bryce. *I'd like to meet this guy someday*. But as Bryce continued to do these types of runs, his times became faster and Kim kept saying, "You have to go after the record. I know you can do it."

On one occasion, Bryce finally met Jock, the superhuman with the insurmountable record. Bryce and Kim were sitting in Jock's tent when Kim, a well-known climber himself, said to Jock, "This guy here is thinking about going after your record." Jock gazed at Bryce's 125-pound frame and laughed aloud, as if to say, "Get a clue, you little runt." Bryce felt

devastated but quickly gathered himself. And Kim kept affirming him: "You can do it. I know you can do it."

Early one morning, carrying a small orange backpack and a light jacket, Bryce ran to the top of the Grand and back in three hours, forty-seven minutes, and four seconds. He stopped only twice: once to take rocks out of his shoes and once to sign the register at the summit to prove he had been there. He felt utterly amazing. He'd not only broken the record, he'd shattered it!



A few years later, Bryce received a surprise call from Kim. "Bryce, have you heard? Your record has just been broken." Of course, he added, "You need to get it back. I know you can do it!" A man named Creighton King, who had recently won the heralded Pike's Peak Marathon in Colorado, dashed to the top and back in three hours, thirty minutes, and nine seconds.

Two years after his last assault on the mountain, and ten days after his record had been broken, Bryce stood in the Lupine Meadows parking lot at the base of the Grand Teton in brand-new running shoes, ready and eager to break King's record. With him were friends, family, Kim, and a crew from the local television station to film his run.

As before, he knew the hardest part of the climb would be the mental aspect. He obviously did *not* want to become one of the two or three who die each year while attempting to scale the Grand.

Sportswriter Russell Weeks describes running the Grand as follows: "From the parking lot you face a run of about nine or ten miles up switchback trails, through a canyon, up two glacial moraines, two saddles, a gap between two peaks, and a 700-foot climb up the west wall of the Grand to the top. The rise and fall in altitude from Lupine Meadows to the top and back is about 15,000 feet. Leigh Ortenburger's *Climber's Guide to the Teton Range* lists the last 700 feet alone as a three-hour climb."

Bryce took off running. As he ascended up, up, up the mountain, his heart pounded and his legs burned. Concentration was intense. Scaling the last 700 feet in twelve minutes, he reached the summit in one hour and fifty-three minutes and placed his verification card under a rock. He knew that if he were to break King's record he would have to do it coming down. The descent became so steep at times that he was taking ten- to fifteen-foot strides. He passed some friends who later told him his face had turned purple from oxygen depletion. Another climbing party apparently knew he was going for the record because, as he passed, they yelled, "Go! Go!"

Amid cheers, Bryce returned to Lupine Meadows with bleeding knees, thrashed tennis shoes, and one horrific headache, three hours, six minutes, and twenty-five seconds after he had left. He had done the impossible!

Word spread fast and Bryce became known as the fastest climber in the West. "It gave me an identity," said Bryce. "Everyone wants to be known for something, and so did I. My ability to climb gave me something to work for and was a great source of self-esteem. It was

my way of expressing myself.” 

Today, Bryce is founder and president of a very successful company that makes high-performance backpacks for climbers and mountain runners. Most important, Bryce has found a way to make a living doing what he loves to do. It's what he's good at, and he's used this talent to bless his life and the lives of many others.

Oh, by the way, the record still stands. (Now, don't get any wild ideas.) And Bryce still has that BB in his eye.

So, my friends, if you need a shot of confidence, start making some deposits into your PBA starting today. You'll feel the results instantly. And, remember, you don't have to climb a mountain to make a deposit. There are, oh I don't know, a billion and one safer ways.



### **COMING ATTRACTIONS**

Up ahead we'll talk about the many ways in which you and your dog are different. Read on and you'll see what I mean!