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8 Lessons Our Children Teach Us

BARBARA DANZA

ne of the unexpected benefits of parenting is that while we do our best to teach our children well, they teach us right back. Of course, they're not trying to teach us. Through their joys and sorrows, their growth and development, and the very miracle of their existence, they unwittingly bestow upon us the lessons that, perhaps, we most need to learn.

Here are some examples of lessons that our children teach us.

Humility

Just as we were starting to make our way through adulthood and we're thinking pretty highly of ourselves, that we've got this whole thing all figured out, along comes this little person to remind us how much more we have

Perhaps we've got impressive resumes or have traveled widely, or have achieved some goals, but now we're faced with diapers and interpreting what the crying is trying to tell us and trying to meet the needs of this amazingly fragile life, and we are brought right back down to earth–and thank goodness

As we grow up, life becomes more serious. Concerned with personal goals, careers, responsibilities, and challenges, we can get bogged down, losing sight of the simple joys

Children aren't bogged down with such concerns. Their lovely spirits move through the world, noticing the adorable puppy walking by, the silly sound they heard in the distance, the funny face their Daddy made, or the amazing way clay feels in their hands.

A child can experience countless joys each and every day. It is a delight to witness. They remind us to not take life too seriously and to let go of things that inhibit us from noticing the simple joys in life.

Children's ability to give their full attention to the present moment is enviable. Whether they're having a tea party with their stuffed animals or giggling down the slide at the playground, that's all they're focused on.

Their minds aren't thinking about the next three things they have to do, the grocery list, the phone call they need to make, the project they need to get back to. They are there, fully, in the moment.



Children's ability to give their full attention to the present moment is enviable

Seeing the world through the eyes of a child is one of life's greatest joys.

present moment more often. Childhood is temporary, and we don't want to be mentally elsewhere and miss it entirely. Our children implore us in so many ways to be present.

We can learn to refocus our attention on the

Compassion

Until we became parents, we didn't realize how deeply we could care for another being. Upon our first child's birth, our lives are changed forever, now dedicated to being the best parents we can be. From that moment on, every decision is looked at through the lens of our compassion for our children. The selfishness that was building as we moved through adulthood begins to dissolve. With any luck, we can successfully harness this newfound level of compassion and extend it beyond our family to others.

Children must play. It is their most important work and something they are naturally compelled to do. It's amazing to watch very little ones naturally play with whatever objects or environment they are provided. It is through play that they learn many of the lessons they'll need in life and receive the emotional connections that allow them to

Many of us, at some point, stopped playing. Wonderfully, our children remind us to play. Playing with our children is a gift to them and ourselves.

Creativity

Do you think you're a creative person? Most adults say no to this question. But most kids

Our children remind us of our innate creup our sleeves and create alongside them. Our inhibitions become suddenly insignificant, and we rekindle our creative selves.

won't always be joyous play and delightful wonder. Sometimes, it's challenging and other times, it's crushingly difficult.

Children will challenge their parents. They'll act out, misbehave, carry on, and go against our wishes in an astounding number of ways.

Knowing how to handle each situation and teach them the values we hope to instill is hard. Parents will often feel lost, and unsure of what to do.

One helpful tool is recognizing that our children provide a mirror to ourselves. While it's not easy to recognize, perhaps the most beneficial gift our children provide us is a reflection of our faults.

When your children behave in a way you don't like, look within yourself and see if you, too, behave in that way sometimes. When your child exhibits a character trait you find unsatisfactory, look within yourself to see if he or she is reflecting a trait you possess as well.

It's not the easiest part of parenting, but such self-knowledge is invaluable, and you may find that the problem in your child dissolves upon your recognizing it in yourself.

Perhaps the best gift our children give us is the ability, once again, to look upon the world in wonder. Seeing the world through the eyes of a child is one of life's greatest joys. It's the thing that makes all of the challenges and sacrifices inherent in parenting seem a small price to pay for

Every task, from the mundane to the epic, becomes a monumental voyage of discovery. You may have walked down your street a million times, but suddenly with your young child in tow, it's a glorious adventure full of new sights, sounds, and delights that make your whole day.

Childhood is beautiful, and the gift of experiencing each stage of it with those you love is a blessing beyond measure.

Our Own Faults Parenting is not for the faint of heart. It 5 of the Fastest-Growing Jobs in

the US That Pay Great Salaries BLS data show that many of the fastest-growing fields offer attractive salaries.

JON MILTIMORE

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) recently offered a 10-year economic forecast that outlines what economists predict the job market to do over the next

While trying to predict the economic future can be tricky, the forecasts can be instructive, particularly for young people deciding what kind of career they'd like to pursue.

BLS Job Projections

In its report, BLS projected the U.S. economy to add 8.4 million jobs over the next decade, reaching a total of 169.4 million jobs in 2028. The projection reflects an annual growth of 0.5 percent, slower than the 0.8 percent annual growth of the past decade.

Many of the largest job gains are expected in the low-skilled fields of personal care and home health assistance, which pay a median wage of about \$24,000, news reports noted.

However, BLS data show that many of the fastest-growing fields offer attractive salaries. Here's a look at five of them.

1. Occupational Therapy **Assistant (Median Salary:** \$60,220)

Occupational therapy assistants help patients recover from injuries and medical operations, as well as help them improve or maintain the basic skills needed for daily living. Occupational therapy assistants are directly involved in therapy with patients, whereas occupational therapy aides tend to perform support activities.

Over the next decade, the U.S. is expected to add 14,500 new occupational therapist assistant jobs, a 33.1 percent increase, which is

well above the national average. To become an occupational therapy assistant, you'll need an associate's degree from an American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA)-accredited institution or a one-year certification program.

2. Information Security **Analysts (\$98,350)**

For companies, the increasing number of cyberattacks is a problem. For information security analysts, it's great job security. These workers install software and create firewalls to protect

Over the next decade, the U.S. is expected to add 35,500 new information security analyst jobs, a 31.6 percent increase,

analyst was nearly \$100,000 in 2018, BLS data show. While most employers will ask for at least a bachelor's degree, a savvy information

lyst can land an entry-level position with some basic certification or by graduating from a cybersecurity

which is much faster than average. The median salary of an information security

The economy is projected to add some 37,000 physician assistant an increase of 31.1 percent. boot camp. MARIO VILLAFUERTE/GETTY IMAGES

3. Statisticians (\$87,780)

Statisticians analyze data and apply statistical techniques to solve problems. It's not uncommon to find statisticians working for the federal government, engineering companies, or research firms.

The economy is expected to add 13,600 statistician positions over the next decade, an increase of more than 30 percent. They make

> you'll likely need an advanced degree in math or statistics. However, a bachelor's degree will suf-

4. Nurse **Practitioners** (\$107,030)

Nurse practitioners coordinate patient care and may provide specialty care

themselves. The economy is expected to add more than 50,000 nurse practitioner jobs over the next decade,

an increase of 28.2 percent. The median salary of a nurse practitioner is \$107,030, but to practice, you must have a master's degree and a state-issued license.

5. Physician Assistants (\$108,610) Physician assistants are medical practitioners who work on teams with physicians, surgeons, and other health care employees.

The economy is projected to add some 37,000 physician assistant jobs over the next decade, an increase of 31.1 percent, making growth in this job faster than in most positions. The median annual income of a PA in 2018 was \$108,000, according to the BLS.

Physician assistants generally need a master's degree and a stateissued license to practice.

These five jobs represent a small slice of the overall economy. While BLS data show we can expect many of the fastest-growing careers to come in the areas of health care, computers, and energy, it's clear that individuals who commit to developing job skills in high-demand fields will find the marketplace rewarding.

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The Art of Emulation: Lessons From the Past for Our Young People

JEFF MINICK

ecently, I asked my 4-year-old grandson what he wanted to be when he grows up. ➤ "Spiderman," he replied without hesitation, and launched into a description of Spiderman's powers-shooting spider webs from his hands to climb buildings, wrapping the bad guys in webs, "and he's really strong, Grandpa"—a narrative accompanied by dramatic leaps, flying fists, and fingers popping out imaginary sticky webs.

> I suspect many kids his age want to become Spiderman, Superman, Wonder Woman, and other such heroes. In my grandson's case-he's also a fan of Batman-he wants to copy his cartoon champions by fighting and beating evildoers. Just as dinosaurs appeal to some children because of their size and strength, so do superheroes.

> As they mature, young people seek out other role models. Pop culture and mass entertainment sway the dreams of a few. The 3-year-old who adored Paw Patrol's Marshall becomes the 14-year-old aspiring to be a movie star like Matt Damon or Scarlett Johansson, a singer like Bruno Mars or Adele, an athlete like Tiger Woods or Serena Williams.

Of course, most find role models closer to home. Hospitalized for appendicitis at age 12, Maria admires the doctors and nurses caring for her and later enters the field of medicine. The example of his mother and father, both attorneys, sends John off to law school. The war stories of Uncle Phil lead Jim to enlist in the Marines, while memories of a beloved eighthgrade English teacher inspires his sister Grace to earn her degree in education.

If we think about it, all of us grew up modeling our behavior on those around us: our parents and other caregivers, older siblings, friends, teachers and coaches, stars of film, stage, music, and sports.

For better, and in some cases, for worse, these people become our exemplars.

Frequently absent these days from this pantheon of mentors are the traditional heroes of the past. Often neglected in our classrooms, and disparaged by the cultural gurus of our time, the historical figures who once galvanized dreams of great deeds and good works, and who served as models for virtue, now seem of little consequence, belittled or banished, mannequins gathering dust in a forgotten storeroom.

Yet for centuries, our ancestors sought inspiration and moral guidance from their predecessors. The Romans, for example, studied "Plutarch's Lives" for its lessons in ethics. Since then, many in the West, including Americans from the Founding Fathers to Theodore Roosevelt, continued to read these portraits for the same reason, hoping to acquire the virtues and avoid the vices of these famous ancients.

Often, we find links in this chain of mentorship. In his youth, for example, Napoleon Bonaparte delved into the character of leaders such as Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar; Winston Churchill regarded Bonaparte as one of his heroes; current British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who has written a biography of Churchill, considers that great UK statesman his leading historical light.

Today, however, our culture seems more intent on destroying heroes than emulating them. It's true that many biographers and



however, our culture seems more intent on destroying heroes than emulating them.

(Above) Alexander the

Illustration from F.J.

Plutarch: Tales of the

Greeks," 1910.

Gould's "The Children's

Great tames Bucephalus

minaries as Washington, Jefferson, Lee, and others, but it's also true that our present age and preschoolers. Recently, I visited the public is often blind to their virtues.

Outraged by the imperfections of our ancestors and inspired by their own sense of moral superiority, some among us seek to eradicate from our memory those dead whose political or cultural views they despise. These assailants remove once-revered figures from our textbooks; they indict them for their flaws while downplaying or denigrating their achievements; they raze their statues and Ruth, Jackie Robinson, Ella Fitzgerald, Sitting busts, and strip their photographs, portraits, and names from public buildings. Too bad.

Were our young people to familiarize themselves with the deeds, struggles, and triumphs of such famous Americans as James Madison, Ulysses S. Grant, Booker T. Washington, and Susan B. Anthony, these men and women might act as maps to the tangled roads and byways of our present age. They might also serve as lamps of illumination in our darkness, human beings whose best traits are worthy of imitation.

Here is where we can take a hand in the moral education of our young. We can enter that dim, forgotten storeroom, wipe the dust from those mannequins, and breathe life into them through the power of biography.

From the stories of these celebrated people, our older teens can find reassurance and strength as they enter into adulthood. Anxious about setting off for college or moving away from home? Take heart from Stephen Ambrose's "Undaunted Courage," with its magnificent depiction of Lewis and Clark, the trials they faced, and the character traits that carried them through adversity. Fearful of obstacles standing in your path? Put some steel in your backbone with Ronald White's "A. Lincoln," where an impoverished boy, by dint of will and hard work, rose to the presidency. Failed, fallen, and afraid you can't regain your feet? Read "Unbroken," the story of Louis Zamperini, who suffered a series of ups and downs, including torture follow his blog.

available to our younger teens, adolescents, library here in Front Royal, Virginia. In the children's room, my rough measurements and estimates found 72 feet of shelving and 1,200 books given over to biographies. Here are some of "The Childhood of Famous Americans" series. Here are various stories of the great from Spencer Johnson's The ValueTales. And here are a battalion of other life histories celebrating such great Americans as Robert Fulton, Babe

There they sit, Stonewall Jackson, Abigail Adams, the Wright Brothers, and so many more, wanting only readers.

ton, Davy Crockett, and Henry Clay.

Bull, Dorothy Day, Ronald Reagan, Clara Bar-

In Josiah Bunting's novel, "An Education for Our Time," a billionaire, John Adams, draws up plans to found a unique college. Adams, a fierce advocate for the study of history, writes that "We may all of us emulate men and women from history—as we do persons known to

us in our own lives." Earlier in this narrative, Adams poses this question to the friend who is helping him in

this grand endeavor: "Robert: is there a man in history that you love, whose life somehow seems to speak directly to your own consciousness, whose life, with its sorrows and exaltations, somehow means something to the way you live your

own? A life you can somehow 'realize?'" Bunting implies an affirmative answer to this question.

By exposing them to biography and history, we can give our young people the same opportunity to learn and emulate the virtues of those who have gone before them.

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C. Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. See JeffMinick.com to

JEFF MINICK

t the Washington Examiner, Julio Rosas examines a recent survey in his article, "Importance of Patriotism, God, and Family Plummets Among Young People: Poll." Rosas opens his article with this brief

"In a new poll conducted by the Wall Street Journal and NBC News, nearly 80% of people aged 55-91 said being patriotic is important to them, while only 42% of millennials and Generation Z, or those aged 18-38, said the same. Thirty percent of millennials and Generation Z said religion was important, compared to the over 75% of baby boomers, with just over 30% of millennials and Generation Z saying it was important to have children."

The one category in the poll where young people outpaced their elders? The importance of self-fulfillment.

If we are among those who believe in the worth of patriotism, faith, and family, our first inclination on viewing these results might be to shake our heads in dismay and wonder what is wrong with Millenials

(those born between 1982 and 1995) and Generation Z (1995 and 2015). Love of country, love of God, love of family, the desire for children: are these not the basic building blocks of civilization? How can so many young people consider them unimportant? What's wrong with them?

An 8th grade

student

original

at the

National

Archives in

in this file

photo.

Washington

views the

Constitution

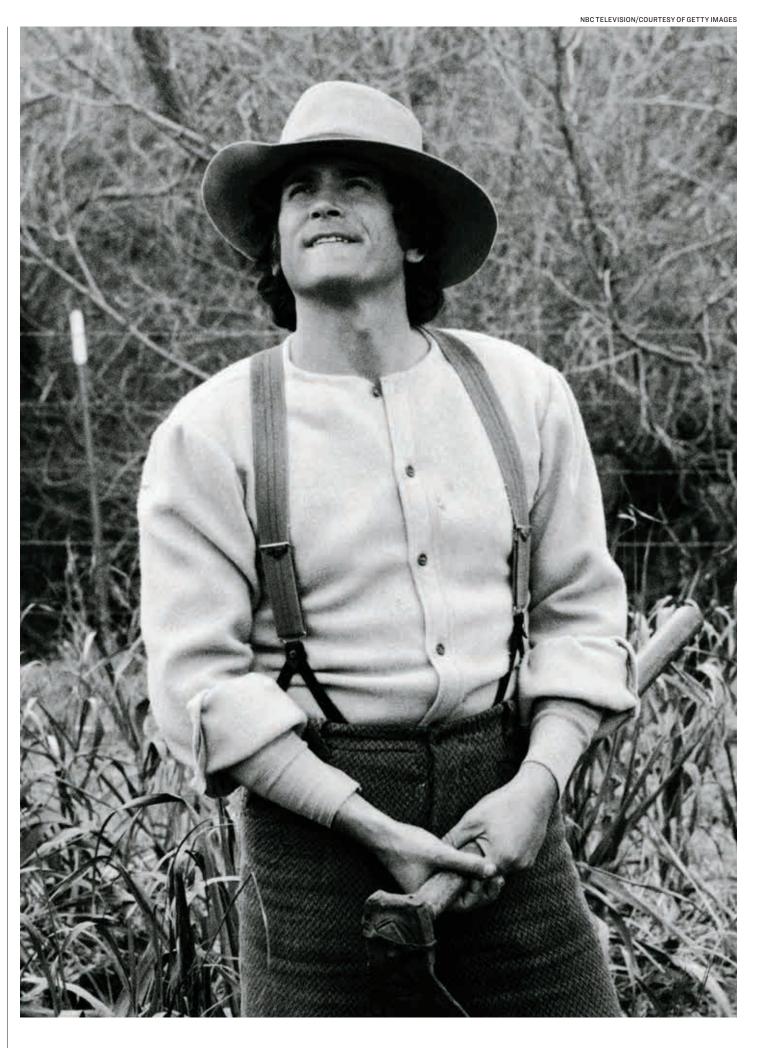
The answer to that last question is

From the time these youngsters were out of diapers, they have inhabited a culture that all too often denigrates American ideals and institutions, religious faith, and the home.

Since the 1960s, the media, many of our educators, and various commentators have demonized American history and American ideals. From these critics and assailants, our country has suffered death by a thousand cuts, so much so that from certain quarters, all we now hear is a barrage of hatred and opprobrium directed at our country.

For just as long, religious believers have suffered similar assaults. mocked for their acknowledgment of a higher power and ridiculed for the traditional beliefs of their faith, particularly those regarding sexuality and abortion. Though we give lip service to a deity—"In God We Trust" remains our national motto-activists, judges, and politicians long ago drove religion and prayer from the classroom and the public square.

The evidence that our culture is no friend of families is abundant. Here's



just one example: Compare the view of family life on television and in the movies from just 40 years ago to the present. Remember shows like "Little House on the Prairie" or "The Wonder Years?" Remember "Christmas Story" or "Father of the Bride?" Now try to think of a television show or a movie from the past decade that offers a positive portrayal of an intact family: a father, a mother, children.

As for the pursuit of self-fulfillment, we indoctrinated these young people

with the line, "I Am Special." We taught our children that the world revolved around them. In too many cases, we neglected to teach them sacrifice, to put others ahead of themselves, to seek to accomplish the good or the great rather than satisfying their own desires.

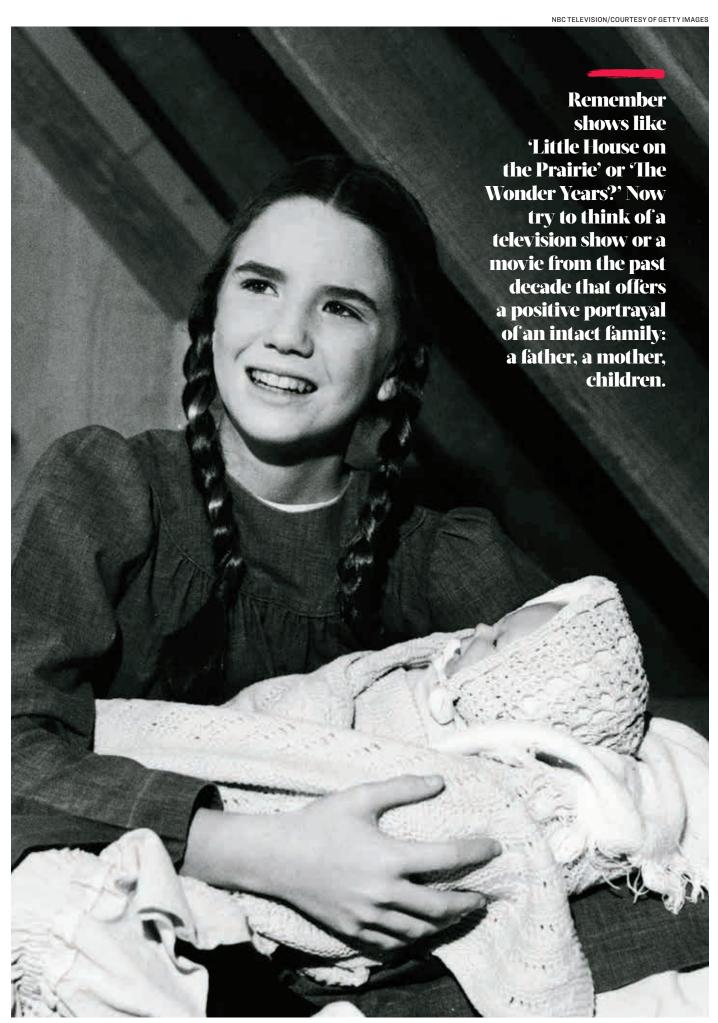
What did we expect our young people would believe?

And unless we reverse course, a greater catastrophe looms in the not too distant future.

The Millennials and Generation Z will be the parents—at least some of them will–the teachers, and the mentors of the next generation. Will they pass on their diminished views of patriotism? Will they lead their children away from religious faith as so many of them were led away? Will they grow healthy families?

I won't be alive to see what transpires, but I have a stake in that future: my children and grandchildren. Eight of my grandchildren were born

of Sand: The Next Generation



after 2015, and of the others, the oldest is only 14. My own four children are all Millennials, and in no way fit the description of decline described in this survey. They and their spouses all practice a religious faith, love their country, and believe in the value of family and children. Self-fulfillment matters to them, but that concept loses its edge when you've just changed your 10,000th diaper.

If you're a Baby Boomer, a member of Generation X (1965-1980), or a Millennial, and if you value your country, practice your religion, and still think of the family as the foundation of culture, there are steps you–and I–can take to keep those values alive.

First, we can raise our kids to be tough. We can bestow on them some of the virtues once a part of the American fabric. A belief in truth, a willingness to serve, a love of liberty and its handmaiden responsibility, frugality, hard work, the desire to solve problems rather than looking

(Left) American actor Michael Landon (1936-1991) stands in a field in a still from the television series "Little House on

American actress Melissa Gilbert (as Laura Ingalls) holds a baby doll.

The Prairie," circa 1976.

to government for those solutions: we can instill these traditional values in the next generation.

Next, we can educate our children. We can see that they receive not only the education of the classroom, a noble and necessary endeavor, but also that they know the meaning of the Declaration of Independence and why it is one of the world's great documents, that they understand in spite of all its flaws, the United States remains a city on a hill, that countless men and women have given of themselves, even their lives, to honor and protect the principles of liberty.

If we practice a faith, we can deposit that faith in our children, making certain they understand both the letter and the spirit of its laws. Whatever our circumstances-married, divorced, single parent-we can model the meaning of family life.

Finally, when the culture pushes on us, we have the duty to push back. When the government orders us to act against our conscience, when society bids us to accept some new politically correct policy, we can buck up against these dictates. We can do so by living our lives in contradiction to those policies, by condemning them privately, and if we are able and willing to take the heat, publicly.

Movie actor Charlton Heston, who marched with Martin Luther King Jr. and later became a voice for conservatism, made these remarks in 1999 in a speech at Harvard University:

"But when told how to think or what to say or how to behave, we don't. We disobey social protocol that stifles and stigmatizes personal freedom. I learned the awesome power of disobedience from Dr. King who learned it from Gandhi, and Thoreau, and Jesus, and every other great man who led those in the right against those with the might. Disobedience is in our DNA. We feel innate kinship with that disobedient spirit that tossed tea in the Boston Harbor, that sent Thoreau to jail, that refused to sit in the back of the bus, that protested the war in Vietnam. In that same spirit, I am asking you to disavow cultural correctness with massive disobedience of rogue authority, soweaken personal freedom."

Raise tough-minded children. Educate them. Swim upstream when

These efforts may seem small or ineffectual, until we remember that a grain of sand slipped beneath the shell of an oyster produces a pearl. We can be that grain of sand. We can help create those pearls.

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C. Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. See JeffMinick.com to follow his blog.

You Have the Power to **Shape Your Relationships**

MICHAEL COURTER

You can't work with someone who won't work with you, right? Or can you?

Marsha comes into my office. She is furious at her husband Roger. She says he is becoming obsessed with his new motorcycle-to the point where he is neglecting her and the kids. She says, "He works all week and goes out every Saturday on that stupid thing with his friends and spends most of Sunday cleaning working on it. How could that motorcycle be so important? I regret ever agreeing to get it! To top it all off, Roger refuses to even talk to me about it. He says I always just get mad, but I can't fix this by myself!"

Is Marsha correct? That you can't work with someone like Roger? Actually, this type of thinking disempowers us in our relationships and renders us victims of the other party's willingness or unwillingness to cooperate with us.

The truth is that you often do have the power to shift your relationships unilater-

You often do have the power to shift your relationships unilaterally.

strategic thinking and the ability to tolerate "unfair" situations and determination. However, people often choose to stay stuck in long-term misery instead of temporarily swallowing their pride to create a better

A Relationship Is Like a Tennis Match

Relationships are co-created by the people in them. People act and react to each other, if you change your responses, the other person cannot help but change how they respond to you. Imagine that a relationship is a tennis match. If you hit a drop shot your opponent will charge forward to return it. If you lob it over their head they will have to retreat.

But you protest: "My opponent won't even play. They just let the ball go." As long as you Steps You Can Take still have contact with someone, you can't help influencing each other.

People respond in relatively predictable ways to our actions toward them. For ex- It depends on how you want to change the ample, if you show the other person you relationship. You have to study the dynam-

ally. I'm not saying it will be easy. It takes are listening and really interested in what they say, they will talk to you more. If you validate them, they feel closer and more trusting. If you scold and criticize someone, they will create distance and put up a wall. If you get angry and yell at them, they might do what you want, but they will also grow resentful or seek revenge. If you ignore them, they will find other people to

> In our example above, Marsha was feeling hurt by the increased time that Roger was spending away from her, and she protested by scolding Roger. Roger responded by creating more distance and refusing to discuss the topic that always seemed to lead

How exactly do you move from the being the unwitting sufferer to actively shaping the relationship you want with someone?



Like in a tennis match, people in a relationship act and react to each other.

to create the shift, initiate the plan, evaluate the results, and make modifications as needed. You can use the steps below as

1. Reflect on the current state of your relationship. Ask yourself the following: What is actually happening between us? How do

ics that are molding your relationship now, Don't allow any biases or emotions to filter decide what you really want, make a plan your perceptions or blind you to the facts. In order to make an effective change, you have to deeply accept where you are. How would they describe the answers to the same questions above? You can ask them if they are willing to answer.

2. Reflect on how you really want the relationship to change. Ask yourself the you feel toward the other person? How do following: What exactly would I want to they feel toward you? How do you know be different about the relationship? What that is how they feel? Are there any other exactly would the other person be doing possibilities? How do you treat each other? differently if that happened? What would I

be doing differently? How would our feelings toward each other change? How would actually happening?

3. Devise a strategy. Answer the following questions for yourself. What am I currently doing that is contributing to the problems in the relationship or maintaining the parts I want to change? What makes me continue start moving the relationship in the direcwhat do, do some research, ask the person get professional help if you need it.

4. Be willing to be the first one to make a change. Often, we are often unwilling to be the party that changes first because we other person should change. We feel like we give up! are giving in. However, this mentality will keep you stuck. You lose your power and influence by holding a passive position and waiting for the other person to initiate. Try and see your changes as your own personal

5. If you want to ask for something from the other person, do it in a straightforward I know for sure that the change I wanted is and clear way. People often ask for things indirectly or simply by criticizing the other person for not doing it. For example, instead of saying "You never call me!" Say, "I really wish you would call me more, I miss you and feel sad that we aren't closer. I really care about you and our relationship and I feel that behavior, even though it goes against so good after we talk." Which one of these what I want? What actions could I take to messages would you rather get? We often make requests indirectly through criticism tion I have decided I want? The possible ways because we fear the person will reject us, but to do this are unlimited. If you are not sure criticism damages the relationship, pushes the other person away, and makes it less themselves what they think would work, or likely that they will give us what we want, or they will only do it to avoid our criticism. 6. Don't be defeated by expectations. If

your first attempts don't work, evaluate what happened, make adjustments and see the situation as unfair and we think the try again. You can only be defeated if you

Michael Courter is a therapist and counselor who believes in the power of personal growth, repairing relationships, and following your dreams. He can be reached growth, rather than waiting for the other at mc@CourterCounsel.com. His website is CourterCounsel.com

THE EPOCH TIMES Week 39 2019

CATHERINE YANG

essie Minassian writes books for sometimes her readers start their encounters with, "Well, my mom/ grandma bought me this book." "But after the first couple of pages, I was really drawn in by your stories," they'll say. "It felt like I was sitting down with you and talking about life."

Minassian as a 14-year-old, about to embark on her grand plan to run away from home. Another book starts with a secret about sexual addiction.

tionships, body image, self-worth, shameall these big, deep issues teenage girls are grappling with, all the while speaking directly to them. It's rare to find media for teen girls coming from a place of love. Their absolute nature of right and wrong.

It's such an instrumental time in life, when you're answering some of the big core questions that we don't really grow out of,"

"If you don't answer them in your teen carry with you through life and grow big-

those questions in a healthy way, before they become adults and launch out on their own," she says.

So many

readers and

listeners tell

her, 'Thank

you for going

sharing that first.'

(Right) As part

of her BEAU-

TIFUL! tour.

Minassian

addressed

the issue of

beauty by

showing girls

how to let go

of a one-size-

fits-all image

ing together at

things women

of beauty.

do in the name

and laugh-

of perfection—

first and

Minassian is a speaker, blogger, and author who has been working with teen girls since 2005.

It began with a Bible study she led with a group of junior high girls.

future, and excitement, but also felt so much pressure and had so many questions. And some of them were struggling with some pretty big issues already, even as young as

When the opportunity came to write a book for teens with the "Soul Sister" series, she wrote "Respect: How to Get It, How to Give It" and has been addressing teen girls'

"There were definite themes: A lot of the questions about boys. A lot about beauty and body image," Minassian says.

Minassian has since identified three core questions underlying all of these issues.

an who would find me worthy of pursuing? And is there a God who would accept me despite what I've done?" she says.

tions are identity issues. As girls, so much of our identity is wrapped up in the way God has designed us to be beautiful and to be in a relationship, so we're trying to find out if we have what it takes in those areas."

ing the Sins No Girl Wants to Talk About," she can respond to.

in their lives, and likely runs counter to a lot of the degrading media girls today are drowning in. It's full of good advice even for those unfamiliar with the Bible, which she references conversationally, and those

Questions that

teen years, if

unanswered,

get bigger as

Minassian

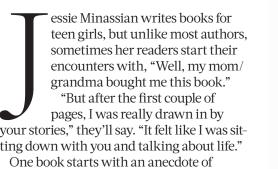
it was a group of 400, and she could just

"They were just so hungry to talk about with a laugh, was about "five tips for a

corresponded with also come from broken homes; it was more common than she

"They're tired of pat answers. I feel like some of the things we tell them, like 'It's just on the inside that counts,' it's like putting a Band-Aid on a greased watermelon-it just doesn't stick," she says. "They need more; they need someone to validate what they're feeling, too, but then also help them grow in maturity in those areas."

Teen girls get a bad rap for being dramatic;



Minassian writes about love, family, rela-

concerns aren't trivialized, but neither is the "I just have such a passion for that age.

Minassian says.

years or in your early 20s, they just sort of ger, and you get more baggage.

"So my goal is to help them work through

Three Questions

"They were so full of life and hope for the

12, 13," Minassian says.

questions ever since.

"Am I beautiful? Am I lovable–is there a

"I think the underlying root of those ques-

The recurring themes have led to her four books: "Backwards Beauty: How to Feel Ugly in 10 Simple Steps," "Unashamed: Overcom-"Crushed: Why Guys Don't Have to Make or Break You," and "Family: How to Love Yours (and Help Them Like You Back)." Minassian also runs the website LifeLoveandGod.com, where she receives more messages daily than

Minassian is writing for an audience who believes in God and believes God has a role who are will probably glean extra layers of meaning and encouragement.

The first time Minassian spoke to teen girls, see that they were eager: nobody else was talking about these topics, not from a moral perspective and a female perspective.

things that were specific to them," Minassian says. That first speech, she remembers

match made in heaven." Many of the girls Minassian has met and





Minassian speaks at a women's



So many readers and listeners tell her, 'Thank you for going first and sharing that first.'

For starters, "I never dismiss what

they're feeling.' "Drama is sort of core to being a teenager; you have all these big emotions," she says. "Everything feels really big, and all of the questions they're having, the implications of those feel very life-altering at that stage.

"They're very weighty, like for some of them getting broken up with in a text message is the worst thing that has ever happened to them in their life, right? I mean if you think about where they're at in life, that might be the worst thing. So yeah, it's going to feel overwhelming, it's going to feel like the end of the world at that moment."

Minassian tries to help guide the thought process, she says, to help girls realize what's going on underneath the turbulent emotions. She wants to help them discover and

become grounded in their identities. For example, in "Family," Minassian brings up the ugly attitude issues that sometimes bubble up-no teen girl is immune, but many of them are aware, and don't want to be acting this way. Her advice is practical, and step-by-step.

All her life, Minassian has been a gregarious type of person, wanting to draw out everybody's stories, and for teen girls, she now has a soft spot.

"I genuinely do care about them and care about where they're at and where they're headed, so I think that comes fairly naturally," she says.



Walking alongside these girls has helped Minassian heal and learn about herself as

In preparation for her talks and books, Minassian spent a lot of time poring over the journals she kept in high school and college, really getting into the mindset of the issues she was struggling with at the time.

"Everything from relationships to figuring out, why did I struggle with an eating disorder? As I've worked to teach the next generation, I've learned a lot about myself in the process," Minassian says.

A self-described "crushaholic" from second grade onwards, Minassian over time learned the difference between admiration and attraction while writing about relationships. She had never considered why women strive to be beautiful, pouring \$30 "Beauty Backwards." The topics seem light to an outsider, but actually represent core identity issues.

"I believe God designed us as women to be the beautiful counterpart to Adam. Because that's part of our identity, then that is going to be a struggle that we have—because of sin wanting to be more beautiful, or questioning whether we are beautiful because of that," Minassian says.

Minassian doesn't dwell on philosophy; her books are full of personal anecdotes: embarrassing moments, things she says to her parents she wished she could take back, secrets she was terrified to admit at

"I always joke, 'My life is an open book' and I probably share too many details about my life," she says. "Someday my kids are going to be like, 'Mom, you shared all that?' But I feel like I have a responsibility as someone-God's been so gracious to forgive me of all the stupid things that I did. And I feel like there's an element of when you're forgiven much, it causes you to love much. And I feel like that love is directed at these girls."

So many readers and listeners tell her, "Thank you for going first and sharing that first."

"A lot of times, we can learn through other people's mistakes, and so I try to have enough humility to allow others to do that," Minassian says. There was only one book where she felt great reservation. She sent in the manuscript and immediately wanted to get it back. The book includes a line that she confesses she could delete.

"I think so many of us are just waiting for someone else to go first. So if that's my role as an author, then I embrace that gladly."

As a teen, Minassian was "a pretty good kid on the outside." She was outgoing, captain of all the sports teams, and loved people. At home, she was the typical temperamental, sassy teenager (who now wishes she could make it up to her parents).

But on the inside, there was plenty she felt she was hiding. "I feel like I dealt with a lot of shame, a lot of embarrassment, a lot of 'If anyone knew the real me, they would never accept me," she says.

Drama is sort of core to being a teenager; you have all these big emotions. **Everything** feels really big, and all of the questions they're having, the implications of those feel very lifealtering at

that stage. Jessie Minassian

When Minassian first spoke to teen girls—400 of them-she could see how eager they were to talk about topics that no one was talking about from a moral, female

Her faith helped steer her life on an upward course rather than a downward

Her mother became a Christian after Minassian was born, and her stepfather became a Christian around the time he and Minassian's mother married, so they all had the chance to figure it out together. Minassian remembers summer camps and the Christian counselors playing a major grounding role that helped "keep my eyes on the vision that I wanted for my life."

Minassian realizes teens today probably

need grounding even more than before. "A lot of the things are the same—I think

the core questions that we're trying to answer are the same, but because of the advent of technology, it's even more difficult to answer those questions correctly because we're constantly looking for the many likes we get," she says.

"Or, the advent of pornography I think has drastically changed that question that we have, 'Am I beautiful?' as women, and has been twisted to mean 'sexually enticing.'

"The internet and social media are here to stay, but I've seen a deep undercurrent of girls who are sick of it, and who are trying "It used to be, when I was a teenager, a

guy might try to do something with you on a date and you'd be like 'you're crazy,' but now you might barely even know him and he's asking for nudes over the phone.

"The crazy thing for me is, I've talked to a number of groups of girls, and I'm talking to them about this topic: I ask how many of them have been asked for nudes, and almost every hand goes up. And then the girls who haven't-what's really crazy is-what the girls who haven't say is, 'I feel jealous, because even though I wouldn't want to send those pictures, I wonder why aren't they

"That is so telling, just the pressure these girls are facing. There's always been pressure on teens, but I think the pressure is just crushing in 2019."

She does have a little bit of dating advice: "I think so much of the heartbreak that I see, especially in teen girls, they're dating like they're married. And so when they break up, it really does feel like divorce. ... I feel like we're just kind of playing with fire if we're dating at 12, 13, 14 and we're

our bodies pure. Minassian gets inquiries from parents as well, but she often directs them to Parenting Today's Teens (HeartlightMinistries.org/ parenting-todays-teens/), because she says she can't claim to be a parenting expert.

expecting to keep our hearts whole and

"I'm still in the beginning stages of this journey," Minassian says.

She has two girls of her own, and they're not quite teenagers yet. They're all adventurers, and have spent the summer paddleboarding, hiking, foraging in the forest for lake. Minassian is at a place in her life when she wants simplicity, to be still, and let the lessons in her life sink in and settle.

"Goodness, when I found out we were having a daughter, I said 'God, I will pour myself out for everyone else's girls, if you will bring people into their life who will do for them what I'm trying to do for others, because I know that they will not listen to me!" she says with a laugh. Even if she gets invited to speak all over the country, it's anyone's guess whether they'll still listen to her when the attitude kicks in.

Minassian says if there were anything she could share with all teen girls, it would be the answers to those three core questions.

"I want them to know they are beautiful, because they were designed to be beautiful just by being female. I want them to know that they're lovable and worthy of pursuit," she says.

"And I want them to know there's a God who loves them, despite anything they've done, and wants a relationship with

"I think that that would be, if I can communicate those three things to young women, I would say that I did a good job."





"The Suicide of Seneca," 1871, by Manuel Dominguez Sanchez. Oil on Canvas, 106 1/3 inches by 177 1/4 inches. Prado Museum, Spain.

Suffering With Grace: Seneca's Stoicism

call ourselves to an

mity have I mastered

today? What passions

opposed? What temp-

tation resisted? What

virtue acquired?

Seneca

account: What infir-

ERIC BESS

e all deal with hardship. Irrespective of race, class, or gender, we all suffer. Suffering is a fact of life. It is inevitable. How can we approach suffering with poise and grace? How can we use it to better understand ourselves? The and statesman Seneca may provide

Seneca's Life and Philosophy

Seneca, born around the start of the first century, trained at a young age in rhetoric, literature, and stoic philosophy. Stoicism is a philosophy that focuses on virtuous behavior, control of the emotions, and the rational use of the mind. Seneca's stoicism is grounded in

the thought that destructive emotions such as anger and grief should be moderated and removed, that wealth should be used in accordance with virtue, that friendship and kindness are significant, and that hardship should be gracefully accepted instead of avoided. Seneca attempted to live according to these stoic principles whenever he faced

Hardship provides an opportunity for the practice of virtue and self-mastery. Seneca states:

"We should every night call ourselves to an account; What infirmity have I mastered today? What passions opposed? What temptation resisted? What virtue acquired? Our vices will abort of themselves if they be brought every day to the shrift."

Seneca aimed to abandon vices, resist temptation, embody virtue, and thus, ultimately, be a better

In his early career, Seneca was elected as a public official in Rome and granted a seat in the Roman Senate. His success in the Senate due to his oratorical ability, however, eventually made the emperor Caligula jealous, and he ordered Seneca to commit suicide.

Later, convinced that Seneca was already gravely ill, Caligula belayed that order, believing the senator would soon die of natural causes.

Within four years, around A.D. 41, Claudius became emperor, and Seneca was still alive. But Claudius's third wife, Messalina, accused Seneca of adultery for political purposes, and he was sentenced to exile on the island of Corsica.

Seneca remained in exile for eight vears until Claudius married his own niece Agrippina, who was able to use her influence to have Seneca We should every night

In Rome, Seneca was appointed tutor to Agrippina's son, Nero. Initially, Nero was greatly influenced by Seneca. The first five years of Nero's rule as emperor

were considered successful because of Seneca's stoic influence. After that, Nero began to

distance himself from his mentor. In A.D. 59, Nero demanded that his own mother be executed, and Seneca was forced to write a letter justifying the execution to the

Seneca was accused of other crimes but always adhered to his stoic principles.

Exhausted, Seneca tried twice to retire from his position, but Nero denied his requests both times. At this point, Seneca began to stay away from the Senate and instead studied and lived a quiet life. It is during this time that he created one of his greatest philosophical texts, "Moral Letters to Lucilius," as a rational pursuit of moral perfection

Nero, however, accused Seneca of being involved in the Pisonian Conspiracy, a conspiracy to assassinate the emperor. While historians doubt that Seneca was involved, Nero sentenced him to death

Seneca calmly accepted this sentence and followed the Roman tradition to accept the order to commit suicide. He cut himself, but because he bled slowly, he also took poison and was put into a warm bath to speed up the process.

Seneca endured many hardships throughout his life. He defended himself and his honor when necessary, but he always did so according to his understanding of stoic principles. No matter what, he tried to see life from a moral perspective

and behave accordingly.

Manuel Domínguez Sánchez's 'The Suicide of Seneca' Manuel Domínguez Sánchez, a 19th-century Spanish painter, depicted the

moment of Seneca's death in his painting Seneca." Sánchez eca lifeless in the bathtub, with figures surrounding

The composition is like the horizontal, classical frieze on the wall behind the figures. One

figure leans against the column on the right side of the picture plane, looks at Seneca's lifeless body, and prevents our eyes from leaving the picture plane. A figure on the far left does the same.

Sánchez lets us know that Seneca is the most important figure in this painting. Another figure, closer to the tub and with his fist to his chest, also looks directly at Seneca. The outstretched arm of the figure on the tub nearly points at Seneca. He seems to beg us to not look away so that we may be affected by Sen-

eca's stoic sacrifice. Even though the figures around Seneca are mourning his death, the majority of them stand tall and motionless like the columns that surround them. Their poses suggest the practice of stoicism: They stand tall and accept the hardship of Seneca's death. This is their way of honoring his life instead of mourning his death.

There is only so much that some of us can endure, however, and one of Seneca's friends weeps at the tub. Seneca's stoicism had a deep influence on the culture of later generations. His thoughts even later helped influence the Italian Renaissance and the return of classical and moral content in French and Spanish art. This painting is an example of his influence. It won first prize at the National Exhibition of Fine Arts in 1871 and embodied the return of classical and moral

themes to Spanish history painting.

Regaining Stoic Insights Seneca endured tremendous suffer-

ing: He was exiled by one emperor and condemned to death by two. Fellow senators attempted to defame his character. And he dealt with physical illness so often that his colleagues often thought he was at death's door. Despite all of this. Seneca wanted

was his way of accomplishing that. His stoicism influenced others as well. It started Nero's rule off on the right track, but when Nero discarded stoic principles, he let his emotions and desires determine his actions. Seneca's death is symbolic for the death of stoicism in Nero, who has become associated with tyranny and extravagance, thus bringing suffering to Rome.

How might stoicism help us take responsibility for and endure our own sufferings so that we do not let our emotions determine our actions and cause pain and suffering for ourselves and others? As a simple example, how often do we let a bad day at work affect not only ourselves but also our coworkers and families?

It's easy to get upset and have a bad attitude when things don't go the way we think they should. We are the ones who inevitably feel and experience our own negativity despite our attempts to take it out on others, and we are the ones who spread the negativity of our bad attitudes when we are unable to keep our emotions in check.

Handling hardship with grace and poise may be as simple as accepting hardship as it comes and reflecting on ourselves while we're experiencing it. In stoic fashion, it may be more helpful to check our emotions, resist temptation, and align with our understanding of virtue, as Seneca did.

At the very least, when we endure hardship and deepen our understanding of what it means to suffer, we may come to better understand the suffering of others and lead with compassion instead of unnec-

Eric Bess is a practicing representational artist. He is currently a doctoral student at the Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts

Why So Many College Students Are in Mental Distress, and What Parents Can Do About It

More supervision, less autonomy, and social media influences while growing up could be making college students more prone to anxiety and depression

KERRY MCDONALD

With college classes underway for the fall semester, parents may worry about how their children will navigate campus life, balance academics and social pressures, and find their pathway to a meaningful career. While parents of college students have long shared these common worries, they

now confront new concerns. The number of college students experiencing mental health issues has soared, with survey findings from the Association for University and College Counseling Cen-

ter Directors suggesting that 41 percent of college students are anxious and 36 percent are depressed. A 2018 survey by the American College Health Association found that 63 percent of college students reported feeling overwhelming anxiety over the previous year, 42 percent said they felt so depressed it was difficult to function over the previous year, and 12 percent seriously

Add to these findings, data showing that the suicide rate for U.S. teenagers and young adults is the highest on record, and parents are right to be worried.

So what is causing this mental health crisis among college-age young people? There are undoubtedly many contributing factors. Greater awareness of mental health issues and more willingness to seek help are positive steps forward that may drive some of the increase in reporting, but there could be other, less favorable explanations, as well.

Too Much Coddling

considered suicide.

Some of the emotional turmoil of college students could be linked to a coddled childhood and adolescence that limits young people from developing the resilience necessary to deal with stress, anxiety, and uncertainty. In their book, "The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas Are Setting Up a Generation for Failure," Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan

Haidt trace some of the increased fragility of today's college students to padded playgrounds, constant adult supervision and structure, more screen time and less authentic, in-person interaction, and an overall emphasis on safety. They write:

"On average, eighteen-year-olds today have spent less time unsupervised and have hit fewer developmental milestones on the path to autonomy (such as getting a job or a driver's license), compared with eighteenyear-olds in previous generations." (p. 160) More supervision and less autonomy, combined with social media influences, could be making college students more prone to anxiety and depression in young adulthood. According to Lukianoff and Haidt:

"Both depression and anxiety cause changes in cognition, including a tendency to see the world as more dangerous and hostile than it really is." (p. 161)

In other words, the normal stressors of college may be perceived by some of today's students as disproportionately dreadful.

Campus Victim Culture

A key focus of Lukianoff and Haidt's book is that the fragility of today's college students leads them to demand protection and security on campus, including the call for "safe spaces" and "trigger warnings." Discomfort may be confused with harm, leading more college students to report emotional distress. In his new book, "Panic Attack: Young Radicals in the Age of Trump," Robby Soave explores the victim culture on college campuses in greater detail. He says that on some college campuses, the focus on mental health has reached an extreme.

Soave describes a visit to the University of Arizona campus, where signs such as "Breathe in. Breathe out. You got this," and "44% of ASU students report having difficulty managing stress," are ubiquitous and direct students to the college's mental health services. Soave explains:

"People who need help shouldn't be afraid



A 2018 survey by the American College Health Association found that 63 percent of college students reported feeling overwhelming anxiety over the previous year.

to ask for it. But at so many campuses, it instead embrace possibilities. They can find has begun to feel like mental instability and trauma are the norm—that students are encouraged to see themselves as sick and vulnerable, and so they do. They have fully appropriated the language of mental illness." (p. 495)

Encourage Self-Empowerment

Given the trends and statistics on college students' mental health, it may seem like there's little that parents can do to help their college-age children. But a key step parents can take is to shift the narrative of victimhood and helplessness, and encourage their grown children to take control of their own happiness and success. Borrowing the language of FEE's Director of Entrepreneurial Education, T.K. Coleman, parents can help their children to see themselves as the "dominant creative force" in their own lives.

These students can set their own path. They can avoid dwelling on obstacles and their passion, incubate innovative ideas, and build new enterprises that are personally meaningful and societally valuable. They can see themselves as agents of change in the world rather than victims of it.

It's a scary time for parents of today's college students, as this cohort experiences rising rates of mental illness and a prevailing college culture that emphasizes fragility over self-empowerment. Fortunately, parents can encourage their college-age children to be strong, resilient, and focused on being active change agents and value creators in their own lives.

Kerry McDonald is a senior education fellow at the Foundation for Economic Education and author of "Unschooled: Raising Curious, Well-Educated Children Outside the Conventional Classroom." She lives in Cambridge, Mass., with her husband and four children. This article was originally published on FEE.org

I Aced the SAT and Was Accepted to Several Ivy League Schools. Here's My Advice on How to Succeed

The biggest secret to success is that there is no secret

ADAM BARSOUK

The biggest secret to success is that

there is no secret. One of the earliest lessons in my medical education was to be wary of one-size-fits-all algorithms. In a world overflowing with data, we've become obsessed with discarding the individual in favor of the statistical.

One Size Does Not Fit All

But the human experience cannot be reduced to numbers and rules. I've learned there is no foolproof guide to curing a patient or succeeding in life, for that matter. What works for the average is often useless to an individual.

Nevertheless, there are general habits and behaviors that have been found, through trial and error, to predispose people toward success in any endeavor. Ultimately, what makes us individuals is our ability to uniquely apply timeless concepts to our own

On top of my occasional writings for FEE, I am a medical student, cancer researcher, and science and health care journalist. As a valedictorian with a perfect SAT

League schools.

Below I share several of the habits that have served me well throughout my career. But ultimately, the onus lies with you to bridge the gap between generalized strategies and your personal

1. Have a Few Goals and a Lot of

Rome wasn't built in a day. Neither is anyone's long-term success. Too often, I've found myself aiming for overly ambitious goals only to 2. Accept the Lottery of Life become discouraged, ignoring the small steps that could have gotten me where I wanted to go. It's a hard landing when you shoot for

This doesn't mean we shouldn't aim for big things. On the contrary, those who make watershed accomplishments usually do so by piecing together years of small and tedious steps. In doing so, one builds not only experience but also endurance—the ability to live life not as a series of sprints but as a marathon. Endurance is everything. After all, behind every nihilist is a disgruntled optimist.

score, I was accepted to several Ivy life. As Nietzsche put it, "he who learns to mitigate their bad luck be constantly evaluated and re- on FEE.org.

drive you forward, you have to envision the most fulfilling possible way to realize your passion. And then you start chipping away. You make a small goal for every day, a slightly more ambitious one for every week, and so on.

where you are now and incrementally aspire to be a little bit closer to where you want to go, soon you'll find yourself "compounding your interest," i.e. translating small gains into cumulative achievements. In biology, this is called a positive feedback loop; in isn't the universe finally "favorphysics, it's inertia. Simply put, ing" you. Rather, a clearer mind success builds on success, and it's your trajectory, not starting point, that makes all the difference.

Rome wasn't built in a day. Neither is anyone's long-term success.

The reason you need to develop perseverance is that you have no control over your luck. Bemoaning suffering just doesn't work. The most catastrophic ideologies, from communism to fascism, revolved around a promise to end suffering in its tracks. But suffering is inevitable. The world is random and chaotic, and regardless of how much time and money you throw at any problem, failure can never

But this does not mean that those who succeed are simply "lucky." By the law of large numbers, over a lifetime each of us will decide what goal to prioritize next. First things first: You have to experience equal amounts of good find your passion (or passions) in and bad luck. A successful person In fact, it must be fluid enough to

has a why can bear any how." To and maximally capitalize on their

To win the marathon of life, you have to learn not to blame yourself for things beyond your control. Judge your decisions based on what you knew at the time. Accept the lottery. I once heard Your roadmap is like a diet—make a prayer that has stuck with me it too constraining and unpleas- for all these years: "Lord, give me ant, and you won't be able to stick the strength to change what I can, with it. Instead, if you just look at the patience to accept what I can't, and the wisdom to know which

When you gain the wisdom to Advice That Works reserve your mental energy for the challenges within your grasp, soon enough, obstacles begin to melt away. This turn for the better enables better choices and outcomes, leading again to that same positive inertia.

Perception of luck is a catch-22: first need to reject the concept al-

3. Create a System to Withstand

We know that small steps add up, but we also know that entropy and chaos are inevitable. From time to time, the flames of entropy will consume years' worth of accomplishments in an instant. That's the second law of thermodynamics: tearing down is always easier than building up.

Weathering the storm requires a system. A system is any organized means of accomplishing your goals and living your life. It may be something as simple as a cal student at Sidney Kimmel daily ledger where you commit a certain amount of time to studying or working. It could also be a complex algorithm you use to

The system need not be perfect.

us using simple trial and error). The key is that it remains in

fined (remember, evolution built

place no matter what. So when life throws its worst at you, no matter how broken you are, you have a worked-out means to force yourself out of bed and back to work. You remember your big goal, and even if it seems further away than ever, you have a baseline from which to rebuild—one small step

The advice I've given is incredibly general—and that's the point. The only thing you and I may have in common is our aspiration to do big things. The best kind of advice, whether medical or for life in general, recognizes the unimaginable variability between individuals and tries its best to bridge that divide. That's how fortune cookies in order to "have good luck," you and psychics "work," and that's how my advice works, too. Anyone who claims they know exactly what's best for you isn't worth

> So work hard. Recharge harder. Don't sprint. Run a marathon. Don't be afraid to climb high. But keep a soft place to land, pick yourself up, and start climbing

Those are the habits that have gotten me to where I am today. And I can't give you advice any more concrete than that-that is, unless I see you as a patient

Adam Barsouk is a medi-Medical College, a researcher at the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute, a health policy contributor and the lead editor and author of the upcoming book "Igniting Liberty." This article was originally published A conversation with expert Linda Mansolillo

BARBARA DANZA

It's not fun to think about natural disasters, but, of course, they do happen. They are not events that just occur "somewhere else." They happen everywhere and they can affect anyone. That's why it's imperative to make sure your family is prepared.

So, what does "being prepared" actually look like? Just in time for National Preparedness Month, I spoke to Linda Mansolillo. She's a natural disaster preparedness expert, Air Force reservist, and founder of LadyBug-Out which provides parents with emergency bags for their children. Here's what she said.

THE EPOCH TIMES: Your expertise in natural disaster preparedness is extensive. Can you share a bit about your experience in this

LINDA MANSOLILLO: I have been in the military for over 20 years. I first entered active duty in the Air Force. I later moved to serving as a guardsman in California and now am a

Readiness is a key area of focus for all military members. Throughout my career I was exposed to many exercises and real-world scenarios that reinforce the training provided by the military.

For the past 5-plus years I have been an instructor on behalf of the United States government traveling to many countries to teach disaster preparedness to local military and civilian leaders.

THE EPOCH TIMES: What inspired you to create your company, LadyBugOut?

MS. MANSOLILLO: My daughter. It really hit home when I read the research that children are one of the most vulnerable populations before, during, and after a natural disaster. unique needs both physically and psycho-

As I dug into it more in an effort to prepare my own daughter, I realized I needed help. I needed guidance on how to talk about these scary topics with her. I needed resources to equip her in developmentally appropriate ways. I needed products that she could interact with.

Thus, LadyBugOut was born. We are here to guide families to prepare their children for disasters large and small. Whether it's an accident on the freeway, a storm, or an earthquake, it may be seen as a disaster in the eyes of our little ones. We aim to help families regularly address plans for the



Involving your children their confidence.

Children are not just tiny adults-they have unique needs both physically and psycho logically.

Linda Mansolillo

from something scary to something em-

THE EPOCH TIMES: What's the first step parents should take in formulating their emergency

MS. MANSOLILLO: The first step is to realize the biggest risk is that you are not physically with your loved ones when an event occurs. To acknowledge this helps you focus on the real value planning can play.

Your emergency plan should be centered around reunification. Everyday life includes delays and disruptions that can feel like disasters for children. During those times, you can rely on the elements found in a good emergency plan-first aid, safety, nutrition, comfort. You are not just planning for a big event. You are preparing your family to be resilient, together.

THE EPOCH TIMES: What are some key elements to an emergency plan that are often

MS. MANSOLILLO: Children. I think the biggest element overlooked is grasping how important it is to involve your kids. Children are curious and learn through interaction, play, and familiarity. By involving your children in your planning, you are building their confidence so they can feel empowered and safer to tackle the unexpected.

Communication. There are many topics that are hard to tackle but planning provides a chance to connect, to hear concerns, and reframe scary possibilities with tangible steps a family can take.

Fun. A plan should not be something you To be successful, just like any new skill, you need to practice. You need to create muscle and your out-of-town contacts? memory. Divide and conquer, be creative, try out equipment and skills on a regular basis.

THE EPOCH TIMES: What are the key items parents should have on hand in case of a disaster?

MS. MANSOLILLO: Parents should ensure they have items in the house that spark a conversation. This includes age-appropriate tools such as light sources, emergency whistles, kids first aid kits, and more.

It is also critical parents have adequate food and drink items that are nutritious and liked by their children. Typical emergency food is unrecognizable. Children rely on food

"what-ifs" in life and flip the conversation as a source of comfort and can't ration like adults can. Thus, a variety of food, drinks, and snacks your child enjoys is critical.

Lastly, children have emotional needs and need comfort items in their emergency kit. They need toys, drawing materials, and other activities that provide distraction in stressful times. And of course, their lovies that help them feel safe and calm.

THE EPOCH TIMES: What tips do you have for parents about talking to their children about the possibility of a natural disaster? MS. MANSOLILLO: Stay calm, collected, and

confident. Whatever you say, your children will remember the feeling in addition to the words. Reframe "fear" to "calm." - Plan for a series of small conversations.

Share knowledge clearly and often. - Follow your child's lead. Encourage them to ask questions.

- Answer questions directly. Keep it fac-

- "I don't know" is an opportunity to look

THE EPOCH TIMES: How often should families review their emergency plan?

MS. MANSOLILLO: Once you have a plan, agree as a family to review it annually on a date that is easy to remember. Revisit this plan when any changes that occur that impact your reunification: new jobs, new schools, or new caretakers. Then break the plan into jobs and assign them to family members and don't be afraid to give age-appropriate tasks to all members of the family.

Examples could include: - Communication: Who is the keeper of do and shove in a dark corner and forgotten. the plan? Who shares the plan with others in your plan such as caretakers, teachers,

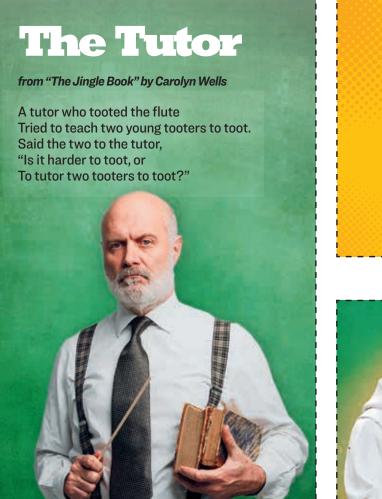
- Logistics: Who restocks and rotates food items and checks supplies to make sure they are working?

- Medical: This person has taken basic first aid or buddy care and knows CPR. He or she also ensures all medication and medical supplies are current and in place.

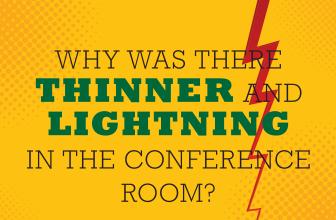
- Transportation: This person is in charge of picking up each person. Remember, it's generally better to have children take shelter in place and for parents to come collect

- Safety: Who knows what to do regarding any natural disasters that are relevant, knows how to turn on and off utilities.

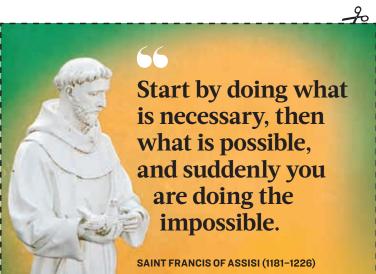
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THE MARKETING DEPARTMENT WAS BRAINSTORMING.

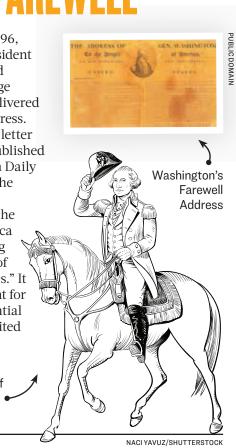


This Week in History

WASHINGTON SAYS

n Sept. 19, 1796, the first President of the United States, George Washington, delivered his farewell address. It was a written letter that was first published in the American Daily Advertiser as "The Address of Gen. Washington to the People of America on His Declining the Presidency of the United States." It set the precedent for limited presidential terms in the United States."

Founding Father of USA and the first •



By Aidan Danza, age 13

THE CHICKEN AND THE JUNGLEFOWL

IUNGLEFOWL rguably one All chickens are mainly descended of the most useful from the red junglefowl, which lives and recognizable in the jungles of India. It lives in very thick forests and has an amazingly farm animals out esplendent plumage. there, second only to Males have a huge "glove" cattle, are chickens. of bare skin on the top of They make tasty eggs and also have fair-tasting meat; they are excellent for gardens and even make good pets. But, you may not know that the chicken has a wild relative—the lesser-known red junglefowl.

their heads and their faces, so that their whole head looks red. They also have a red as the glove is. Below the glove and the wattles, the neck s covered by shiny, gold, long feathers. The belly and chest are grayish, but the rings have colors of orange, teal, and lighter orange. he whole tail is green, and all colors on the bird except for the glove are iridescent. The legs are gray, which is a very good way to distinguish between red junglefowl and regular chickens, whose legs are

The female is rather pretty as well. She does not have a glove, just a bare patch around her eyes, and she has the male's golden feathers on her neck, although it is more subdued. She has varying shades of rich brown on her body, ending with a black tail. Interestingly, red junglefowls have

a very strict pecking order. There is one dominant male, and he controls a circle with a diameter of about 140 feet. A red junglefowl shows his submission to the dominant male when he lowers his tail and head, bows, and tilts the head to one side. When the king dies, his second-incommand (like a prince in our world) succeeds him. Chicks are introduced to this strict social structure when they are a week old.

Red junglefowls eat corn, soybeans, grass, and anything else they can find, just like the domestic

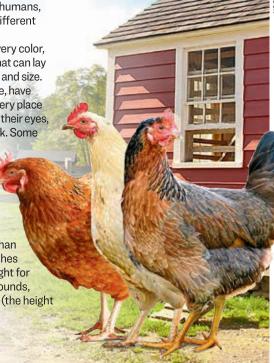
chicken.

Meanwhile, while the red junglefowl is still living happily in the jungles of India, chickens have spread across the world with the help of humans, and now there are many different oreeds of chicken.

CHICKENS

There are chickens of every color, (there are even chickens that can lay eggs of every color) shape, and size. Silkie chickens, for instance, have thick hairlike feathers in every place on the body, even covering their eyes, and their meat is blue-black. Some chickens can lay over 300 eggs a year.

Most chickens are larger than junglefowl and less resplendent in their plumage, but this is not absolute. There are chickens that weigh less than a pound and just 6-10 inches tall, while the average weight for a Jersey giant is 13–15 pounds, with a height of 26 inches (the height of a small toddler).



Community: The Missing Element in Modern Schools?

ANNIE HOLMQUIST

I'll admit it. I've always had a secret fondness for stories about one-room schools.

Why? Perhaps it's the simpler time. Perhaps it's the fact that they seemed to value good education and hard work. Perhaps it's the family-like structure and community they fostered.

That last element is especially missing from today's schools, which ship busloads of children away from their communities to massive campuses where it's easy to get lost in the

I thought of this when I came across a report on rural charter schools. Such schools, author Kelly Robson explains, are not that successful. However, she and her colleagues discovered three elements

that make some schools into winners. For starters, successful

rural schools have leaders "with deep ties to the local community." They aren't founded by do-gooding "outsiders," but by those who have a heart for, and understanding of, local dynamics. Second, successful rural

schools fill "a gap in the community's education offerings." They provide a closer school when the public school is too far away, they provide better educational opportunities compared to other options, and they provide unique experiences suited to local

Finally, successful rural schools "maintain consistent leadership and/or engagement with school founders." Their lead-

A one-room schoolhouse in Paradise Valley, Mont.

ers don't quit after a few years; instead, they remain faithful to the school, immersing themselves in the Do you see the common

culture of the community. thread here? These schools are successful becausejust like the one-room schools of old–they play off the locale and make community a priority.

In our global, internetconnected culture, it's easy to pooh-pooh the importance of community. But as the late educator and author John Taylor Gatto explains, it is that sense of community which makes the differ-

ence between making a

whole, completed soul,

or a damaged, displaced

one. It's also the difference between a free individual or an enslaved creature: "By allowing the impo-

sition of direction from centers far beyond our control, we have time and again missed the lesson of the Congregational principle: people are less than whole unless they gather themselves voluntarily into groups of souls in harmony. Gathering themselves to pursue individual, family, and community dreams consistent with their private humanity is what makes them whole; only slaves are gathered by others. And those dreams must be written locally because to exercise any larger ambition without such a base is to lose touch

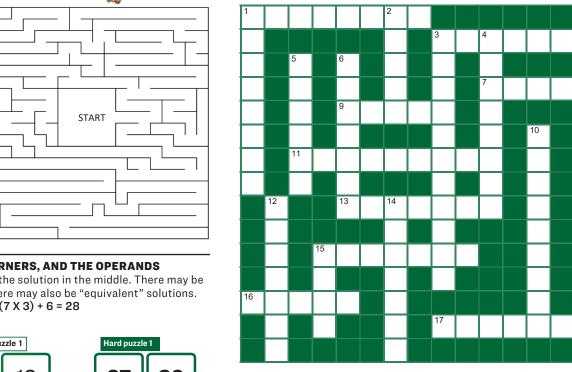
with the things which give

life meaning: self, family,

friends, work, and inti-

Could this be the key to the better American education so many of us long for? Would our children thrive in school if they could be in smaller organizations where the adults in charge know and understand their community, families, and local quirks and interests? And would our children have a better chance to blossom and become unique, whole individuals, rather than individuals enslaved to a system that treats them as simply another cog in a machine?

Annie Holmquist is editor of Intellectual Takeout. In her role, she assists with website content production and social media messaging. This article was originally published on Intellectual Takeout.



USE THE FOUR NUMBERS IN THE CORNERS, AND THE OPERANDS (+, - AND X) to build an equation to get the solution in the middle. There may be more than one "unique" solution but, there may also be "equivalent" solutions. For example: $6 + (7 \times 3) + 1 = 28$ and $1 + (7 \times 3) + 6 = 28$

(10 + 2 - 8) × 15

3

9

 $(8 \times (8 - 2 \times 9))$

27 | 30 6 + || - || × || ÷ Solution For Easy 1 Solution for Medium 1 30 × 4 - 29 - 27

 $t + 05 \times (72 - 92)$



Across Ball player (8) One with growing concerns (6)

Hospital figure (5)

Stephen Hawking was one (9)

13 If you can read this, thank a ____ (7)

15 Bank employee (7) 16 One who goes for the gold? (5)

Down

1 Car repairman (8) 2 Role player (5)

4 News gatherer (8)

3 Hook and ladder rider (11)

Ninja Turtles' namesakes (6)

6 One who knows the drill (7)

8 Fitting job for Miles? (11)

10 Blueprint creator (9)

12 Army man (7)

15 Fancy cook (4)

5 Jobs of any of the Teenage Mutant

14 Stephen Curry or Simone Biles (7)





Airlines worker (5)

17 Key school employee (7)

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LIFE & TRADITION 13



THE EPOCH TIMES

TRUTH AND TRADITION \equiv

FINE ARTS

The Lessons Scandals Teach

Two ancient Chinese paintings on humility and integrity



"Tao Gu Presents a Poem," by Tang Yin. Hanging scroll, ink and colors on silk, 66 1/2 inches by 40 1/4 inches. National Palace Museum in Taipei, Taiwan.

MIKE CAI

Scandals allure and entice us. While scandalous events are feverishly debated today, the ancient Chinese used such incidents as subjects of art, often to teach moral lessons. These incidents became timeless through art and thereby offered insights into ancient Chinese thought and values that remain relevant to modern-day society.

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My Heart Is Like a Singing Bird

EMILY DICKINSON and CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

Their deep

voice in their

faith also

found a

works.

In Emily

spirits.

Dickinson

and Christina

Rossetti, we find kindred

JEFF MINICK

oth women were born within five days of each other in 1830. Both came from families prominent in their communities.

As young teenagers, both suffered a breakdown and subsequent melancholia. As adults, both became caretakers for family members.

Both suffered at times from ill-health. Both were deeply spiritual. Both remained unmarried.

And both were two of the greatest poets of the 19th century. Though her verse was little known while she lived, many critics today rank Emily Dickinson (1830–1886) as one

of the world's finest English-language poets. Born in Amherst, Massachusetts, a town she rarely left, Dickinson had a happy childhood, especially while attending school. Her father was an attorney with an interest in politicshe served a single term in the House of Representatives-and the townspeople respected the family for

their contributions to the community. Emily had a younger sister, Lavinia, and an older brother, Austin.

Across the Atlantic, her contemporary in Great Britain, Christina Rossetti (1830-1894), won acclaim for her verse while she lived. Her father was a political exile from Italy, a poet, and a teacher. Rossetti's mother taught her at home and later, because of the family's straitened financial circumstances, began instructing other students as well. Rossetti had two brothers, Dante Gabriel, a well-known painter and poet, and William, also a writer. Her

sister, Maria, worked for a time as a livein governess, but like her siblings took up the pen.

As adults, Rossetti and Dickinson lived very different lives. Fewer than a dozen of Dickinson's poems were published during her lifetime, while writers and critics hailed Rossetti as the successor to Elizabeth Barrett Browning. In Amherst, Dickinson gained a reputation for various eccentricities, maintained most of her friendships by correspondence, and became such a recluse in her later years that she rarely spoke to visitors except through a closed door. Rossetti reveled in the company of others and was part of a large circle of friends, including the Pre-Raphaelites, which her brother Dante Gabriel had helped found. She also

> performed charity work, including 11 years as a volunteer worker in a home for former prostitutes.

Despite these differences, we find in these two poets several shared interests. Both had a love for nature and a sharp eye for describing its bounty. Dickinson drew much of her inspiration from the large grounds

surrounding her home, resulting in poems like "I Taste a Liquor Never Brewed." Though a child of London, Rossetti spent time as a young girl on her grandfather's cottage 30 miles from the city, developing there a lifelong delight in the natural world.

Their deep faith also found a voice in their works. Rossetti was a practicing Anglo-Catholic whose devotional poetry often reveals a sensual thirst for the Divine. In "Like as the Hart Desireth the Waterbrooks," she writes:

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My heart is yearning: ily treated, the 19th century was no stranger Behold my yearning heart, to the hearse and the graveyard. From the And lean low to satisfy, maudlin to the austere and profound, much Its lonely beseeching cry, of the verse of that age mourn the loss of For Thou its fullness art... loved ones and contemplates the mysteries beyond this world.

A daguerreotype taken in December 1846 or early 1847; the only authenticated portrait of **Emily Dickinson** after childhood. **Amherst College** Archives & Special Collections.



Both Dickinson and Rossetti wrote poems in which they envisioned their own demise. In one of her best-known poems, "Remember," Rossetti writes:

PUBLIC DOMAII

Remember me when I am gone away, Gone far away into the silent land; When you can no more hold me by the hand, Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay. Remember me when no more day by day You tell me of our future that you plann'd: Only remember me; you understand It will be late to counsel then or pray. Yet if you should forget me for a while And afterwards remember, do not grieve: For if the darkness and corruption leave A vestige of the thoughts that once I had, Better by far you should forget and smile

Than that you should remember and be sad. Two of Dickinson's poems on death typi-

cally find a home in our anthologies of literature. The first, "Because I Could Not Stop for Death," recounts the journey of the poet riding in a carriage with Death toward a graveyard and "Eternity," arriving eventually at a "House that seemed a Swelling of the Ground." In "I Heard a Fly Buzz When two poets who never met but whose written I Died," Dickinson addresses the arrival of words reveal shared passions. death at a bedside:

I heard a Fly buzz – when I died -The Stillness in the Room Was like the Stillness in the Air – Between the Heaves of Storm -The Eyes around - had wrung them dry And Breaths were gathering firm For that last Onset – when the King Be witnessed – in the Room -I willed my Keepsakes – Signed away What portion of me be Assignable – and then it was

A portrait of Christina Rossetti. September 1866, by her brother Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Andrew Lloyd Webber Collection

There interposed a Fly

In Emily Dickinson and Christina Rossetti, we find kindred spirits: women hard-pressed by familial obligations and interior struggles,

With Blue - uncertain - stumbling Buzz -

And then the Windows failed – and then

Between the light - and me -

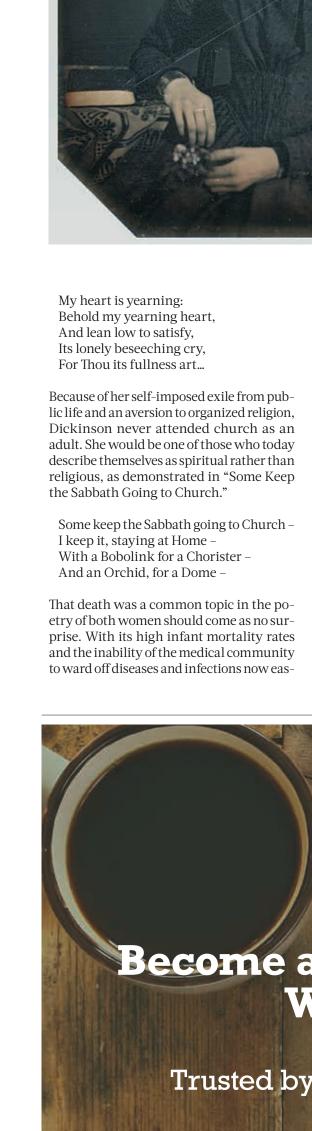
I could not see to see -

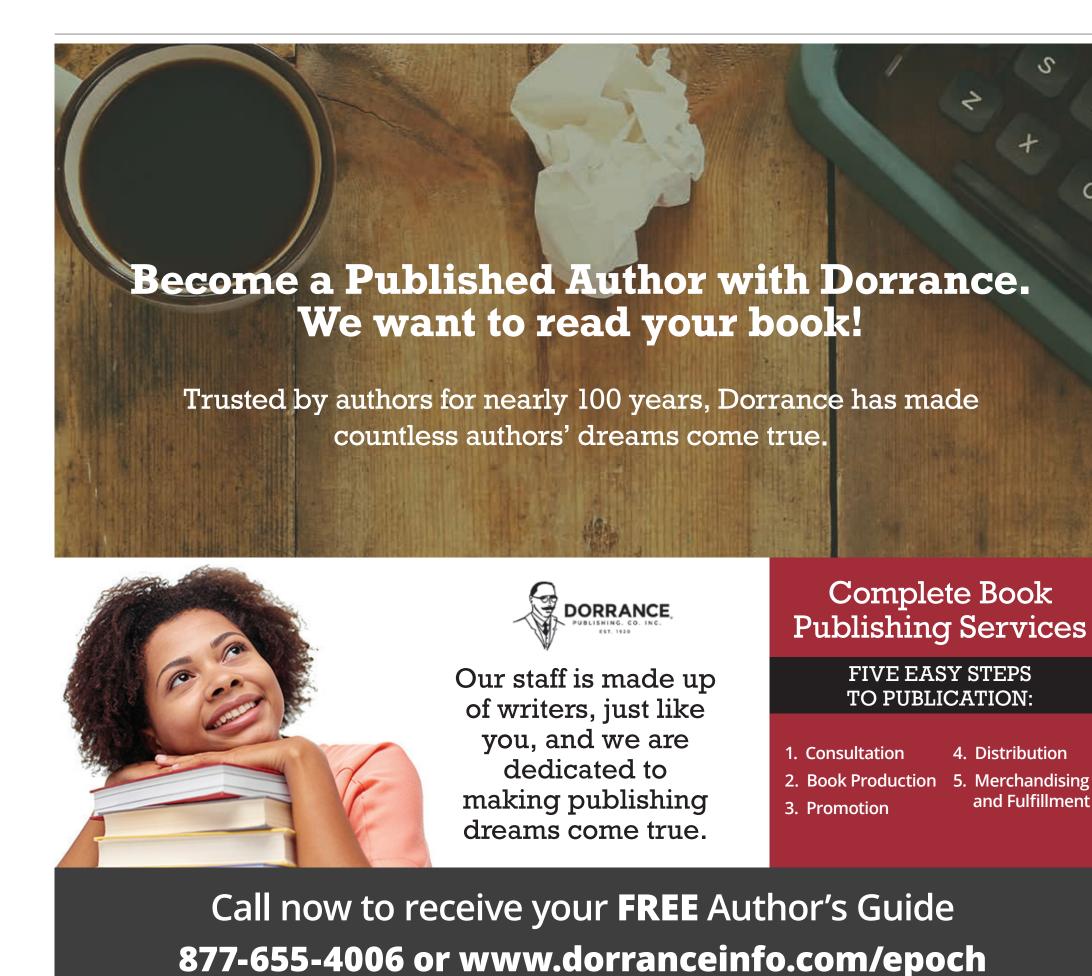
Christina Rossetti once wrote, "My heart is like a singing bird." Read the verse of these two women, preferably aloud, and you will hear them singing still.

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C., Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. See JeffMinick.com to follow

4. Distribution

and Fulfillment





A nightingale singing by its nest. Etching.

THE NIGHTINGALE

ALL IMAGES IN PUBLIC DOMAIN

The Lessons Scandals Teach

Two ancient Chinese paintings on humility and integrity

reveals otherwise.

Continued from **Page 13**

During the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), artists often depicted women as a common motif. Among these artists, Tang Yin (1470–1524) and Qiu Ying (1494–1552), who were two of the Four Great Ming Masters, featured court ladies and courtesans in their works and drew inspiration from past scandals for their themes. opportunities to reflect on

With symbolism and allegories that went beyond mere depiction of the outward beauty of the ladies, Tang Yin and Qiu Ying provided the ancient Chinese with opportunities to reflect on their own characters and their paintings served as reminders to uphold integrity.

A Rendezvous With Humility

Tang Yin's "Tao Gu Presents a Poem" depicts a seemingly innocent encounter between Tao Gu and a courtesan. The setting is when the Song Dynasty (960–1279) was first establishing itself as a central power, and the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (908–979) were disintegrating.

Tao Gu (903–970) was an official from the Song court and served as a diplomat to the Southern Tang empire (937–975), which was one of the Ten Kingdoms. Coming from the Song court, Tao Gu always assumed an air of arrogance as he faced the Southern Tang ruler Li Houzhu.

Outraged by Tao Gu's insolence, Li Houzhu contrived a scheme to expose Tao Gu's impudent behavior. The ruler sent a famous courtesan, Qin Ruolan, to seduce Tao Gu while he was traveling to the Southern Tang.

Courtesans like Qin Ruolan were essentially female entertainers who were not bound by marriage. As professional hostesses, they were highly educated in areas such as music, dance, and calligraphy, and one of their main roles was to use their talents to alleviate tension between scholars and officials in business settings.

In the painting, both Tao Gu and Qin Ruolan are portrayed in the middle of a tryst in a garden. However, as the story of the event tells us, Tao Gu is unaware of her courtesan status, as Qin Ruolan is disguised as an officer's daughter.

She wears an embroidered blouse and sits with her legs crossed as she elegantly plucks the strings of a pipa, which is a four-stringed, pear-shaped instrument traditionally associated with courtesans.

Artists Tang Yin and Qiu Ying provided the ancient Chinese with

their own

characters.

A detail from

"Tao Gu Presents

Hanging scroll, ink and

colors on silk, 66 1/2

inches by 40 1/4 inches.

National Palace Museum

in Taipei, Taiwan.

The story reveals that he, enamored by her beauty and losing himself in the music, composes a poem as a gift for her. Since courtesans were stigmatized by society and did not occupy a high status, his behavior would have been seen as

Symbols in the Details

etiquette.

Tang Yin subtly portrays the intimacy of the meeting with hints and clues. Behind Oin Ruolan is a painted screen, which sequesters the couple in a secluded space. In the lower left, a child hides behind some garden rocks to eavesdrop on their conversation, indicating the unseemly nature of the situation. A burning candle in between the two further accentuates the secrecy of the rendezvous and suggests that it is nightfall.

indiscreet and a breach of ancient Chinese

At first sight, their encounter is a seem-

ingly decorous one, but a closer look

Tao intently gazes at her as he listens

to her play, with a brush and some paper

In addition, meticulously painted garden motifs are incorporated into the scenery. The couple sits under the shade of a willow tree, the dangling foliage being a symbol for a woman's hair. In the foreground, several plantains sprout from the ground, symbolizing her beauty.

Tang Yin also included some bamboo shoots in right periphery of the painting. While bamboo is associated with the value of integrity, here it is situated away from the main scene, signifying Tao Gu's inappropriate behavior.

The story ends the next day when the Southern Tang ruler, Li Houzhu, hosts a banquet for Tao Gu after he arrives. Again, Tao puts on a façade of condescension and conceit. Li Houzhu then asks Qin Ruolan to come forth and perform a song with lyrics from the poem that Tao had written

Tao, now ridiculed in front of everyone by a courtesan, loses his dignity and feels humiliated. Soon after, his status as an of-

Thus, in this painting, the importance of the ancient Confucian value of humility is the theme hinted at. Tao Gu felt like he was above everyone in the Southern Tang Kingdom since he came from a more powerful empire. However, acting in a condescending way did not earn him respect, but rather made him appear foolish and led to his downfall in the end.

Confucius said, "Humility is the solid foundation of all virtues." Indeed, the ancient Chinese believed that a Confucian leader should be unassuming, humble, and empathetic, and one who listens to people and is always sensitive to their needs. Only with these qualities could a leader be truly influential and inspirational.

A Portrait of Integrity

Qiu Ying's "Spring Morning in the Han Palace" is a long handscroll depicting court ladies in the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.–A.D. 220) palace. The handscroll opens on the left with the Han palace gates and takes us through opulent architecture and courtvards, with trees and garden rocks interspersed between the buildings. The first few scenes give us a glimpse of palatial life as elegant court ladies engage in various leisurely activities.

At the outskirts of the palace, one lady leans over the rails with her children to watch the fish in the lake. Two peacocks anxiously await their meal as a lady tosses

Here, court ladies are gathering to form an ensemble and play musical instruments such as the lute and pipa. One lady adjusts and tunes the strings of a zither while a second lady unwraps another zither and is about to join in. To the right, two ladies have some snacks while others appear to be dancing to the music.

The status of the ladies can be differentiated by their hair adornments; the higherranking court ladies had fancier coiffures with jade and gold hairpins, while the maids had plainer hairstyles.

Moving further along the handscroll, we see a court lady walk up the stairs while carrying a sheng, which is a Chinese reed instrument made of numerous pipes. Her posture and the manner in which she stumbles up signify the traditional practice of foot binding. To the left, several ladies arrange flowers, while two ladies at the upper left enjoy a novel.

In another scene, the court ladies play a game of weiqi, which is an ancient Chinese board game. To the left, some are preparing a roll of newly woven silk, while directly above, some are weaving an intricate tapestry. Beside them is a mother playing with her two children.



Court artist Mao Yanshou paints the lady Wang Zhaojun in "Spring Morning in the Han Palace" by Qiu Ying. National Palace Museum in Taipei, Taiwan.

A Swindle

So far, these depictions present the harmonious side of court life. But the next scene shows the more competitive aspect of court life. Qiu Ying has actually painted a narrative depicting the concubines of Emperor Yuan of the Han Dynasty.

It was an ancient Chinese custom for the emperor to be presented with portraits of the women at his court before meeting with them so that he could decide whom to choose as a consort.

The scandal depicted involved one particular court lady.

In order to attract the emperor's attention, the court ladies often bribed court artist Mao Yanshou to paint them more beautiful than they actually were. One court lady, Wang Zhaojun, out of her righteous heart, refused to bribe the artist. As revenge, Mao Yanshou depicted her as ugly, with moles on her face.

In the painting, Wang Zhaojun sits in

front of a screen as the artist paints her portrait. The other concubines on the side bicker and gossip among themselves as they watch the painting progress.

One lady jealously peeks around the back of the screen to spy on the scene. Two eunuchs in the foreground converse with each other with smirks on their faces, as they are aware of the bribes and of Mao Yanshou's fraudulence. Eunuchs were castrated men who guarded court women to ensure that they weren't impregnated by anyone but the emperor.

The story goes that upon seeing Mao Yanshou's distorted portrait, Emperor Yuan never visited Wang Zhaojun, and she remained a lady-in-waiting of low status.

One day, the ruler of the Xiongnu empire from the north came to the Han court to seek a friendly relationship through marriage. The emperor, who saw the smaller empire as full of barbarians, chose Wang Zhaojun as the bride, believing that

Qiu Ying has actually painted a narrative depicting the concubines of Emperor Yuan of the Han Dynasty.

Mike Cai is a graduate of the New York Fei Tian Academy of the Arts and the University of California-Berkeley.

she was the least attractive of his ladies. However, only when she was summoned did Emperor Yuan realize that she was actually the most beautiful woman at court. But it was too late; the offer had been made. Enraged by Mao Yanshou's deceit, the emperor ordered the artist to be

This scene in the painting warns against the sins of bribery and emphasizes the significance of the Confucian values of justice and righteousness. By willingly accepting bribes and harming Wang Zhaojun's chances at court, the artist determined his

Confucius said, "The superior man is aware of righteousness; the inferior man is aware of advantage." Confucian thought emphasizes having the moral acumen to make decisions based on the responsibility to do good rather than being swayed by gain and profit. Only with a virtuous heart can there be beauty in the character.







"Spring Morning in the Han Palace" by Qiu Ying. National Palace Museum in Taipei, Taiwan.

"The Tower of Babel." 1563, by Pieter Bruegel the Elder. Museum of Art History,

LITERATURE

The Tower of Babel We Build

We have

lost sight of

between facts

and truth.

JAMES SALE

of the 18th century, it has become increasingly difficult to talk of myths and mythology in a world that increasingly craves science. And what this means is that people want facts and are suspicious of anything other than facts. This is the case despite the fact that facts themselves aren't always what they are cracked up to be.

For we have lost sight of the distinction between facts and truth; indeed, in our post-modern world there is no truth.

it is not facts that make religions and and (in the New American Stanmyths powerful and accepted. No, they depend on being true, which is a completely different idea.

When we talk, for example, of King Arthur and the Round Table, its truth is independent of the existence of King Arthur; moreover, Arthur's specific existence is unimportant compared with the narratives about him.

As Northrop Frye put it: "A myth is designed not to describe a specific situation but to contain it in a way that does not restrict its significance to that one situation. Its truth is inside its structure, not outside." For the most important things in life are invisible and not subject to "facts": Love is invisible, values are invisible, and our souls are invisible.

To take that last illustration—that we have an actual soul-the whole testimony of mankind from the beginning of human history testifies to its reality. Still, that doesn't make our soul a fact from a scientific point of view, though it be true nonetheless.

We need to return to the myths of old, which reveal profound truths about ourselves and our condition, and which may well help prevent us from falling into serious error-errors that in the context of today may have apocalyptic consequences.

The Tower of Babel

Let's turn to the story of the Tower of Babel in the Bible, which occurs in the first nine verses of Chapter 11 of the book of Genesis. It occurs just after the Flood story, and so is the last great prehistoric story before we encounter the more historical-type stories beginning with Abram/Abraham and the creation of the Jewish race.

The story relates that the whole earth had "one language and few words" as mankind settled in the East, in the land of Shinar. The word "Shinar" seems to have two primary etymological meanings: first, to express intense negative emotion or the experience of violence; and second, to be very afraid. This latter definition seems possible as the men explicitly express a fear of being "scattered abroad." They also want to make a "name for themselves."

reputation, and to be famous is considered an antidote to that fear of being scattered, reduced, and coming to nothing—an existential fear, in other words.

Thus, they decide to counter their own impotence and fear by building a city, and especially a tower with a "top" that penetrates heaven. And they will do it, significantly, not with natural (that is, Godmade) products like stone, but with man-made substitutes, like bricks.

God views this construction, and dard Version, 1973) concludes, "Behold, they are one people, and they be impossible for them."

So God, to prevent this, confuses the languages of the world and thereby scatture's being completed, as human beings can no longer communicate effectively.

Falling Away From God

Fundamentally, the story of the Tower of Babel is about heresy, an alternative myth, that simply never goes away and which always leads humans astray.

In essence it says this: Human beings are perfectible, godlike creatures whose hopes and aspirations can be achieved solely through human agency, and the primary vehicle that will enable this to happen is what we call education. Education will lead us to a better tomorrow.

The condition of Western society manifests as confusion, fragmentation, polarization, the absence of any agreed-upon values, and the self being enthroned as its own god.

That this is the opposite of what all the great ancients thought is shown by one simple "fact": Namely, the ancients (for example, Greeks, Egyptians, Indians, to mention only three venerable cultures) believed that the world had fallen away from a Golden Age and was in, or head-

Regression, therefore, not progression was what the trend of human history demonstrated. But clearly, for those building a Tower of Babel, the Golden

To make a name for yourself, gain a

have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; and nothing that they propose to do will now

ters the people, which prevents the struc-

ing for, a brutal Iron Age.

Those Who Build a 'Perfect' World

Let's take a remote and arcane example of those believing in humankind's perfectibility: the Pelagian heresy of the fourth and fifth centuries. This heresy, which constantly resurfaces in Christianity in various forms, denies the cardinal virtue of accepting that it is by the grace of God, and not by human will, that salvation is found. Pelagius maintained that humans through their own willpower could be innocent of evil and so be good.

Irrespective of Christian theology here, we can surely detect the Greek become godlike and good ourselves without reference to God or the gods. Zeus would not have liked it and almost certainly would have punished it. But if this seems remote, let's take a

much more up-to-date example: Marxism and its offspring, communism. It has often been observed that communism is a religion, but a religion without God. And it is a perfect example of that secularization which is the Tower of Babel, and whose drift can be summed up in one word: progress.

Communism stipulates that we don't need God; we can create our own value system, our own morality, and our own purposes. This sense of alienation from God or the gods has infected our culture ever since the 19th century.

The Marxist progress is the classless society that must happen: pure utopia, and pure perfection of humanity. Pure false and rationalistic myth.

Of course, socialism mirrors—perhaps "apes"—this kind of Marxist thinking, as does, counterintuitively, "progressive liberalism" in our own day. The philosopher John Gray commented, "What is striking is how closely the market liberal philosophy that underpins globalization resembles Marxism. Both are essentially secular religions, in which the eschatological hopes and fantasies of Christianity are given an Enlightenment twist." They are all engaged in building the perfect world, but without any reference to

God or the gods: a veritable Tower of Babel.

A Metaphor for Today

The quintessential condition of all Western societies stems from "babel," as in its etymology from the Hebrew verb (balal), meaning to jumble or to confuse, and from which our own word "babble" seems associated. It manifests as confusion, fragmentation, polarization, the absence of any agreed-upon values, and the self being enthroned as its own god. Consider that never before has there been so much transmission and so little communication, as solipsistically we are all talking to ourselves while no one

All the while technology, science's twin,

promises ever more utopia just ahead: AI, robotics, cures for cancer, living on Mars, living to 150 or 200, and every other fantasy beside. It seems to be two sides of a coin: On one side is complete fragmentation, which is pitched alongside the fantasy-the modern myth-that all will be well because our technology will save us.

Late in the 19th century, L.L. Zamenhof published the first book on Esperanto, an artificial language (still spoken by approximately two million people as a second language in 115 countries) that sought to overcome the curse of Babelword "hubris" in the idea that we can the curse that prevented humans doing what God or the gods could do. But this kind of language proved inadequate for

> The real language to reverse the effects of Babel was created in the 20th century and is now flourishing the 21st: It is, of course, the digital language of our computers and cellphones and almost any current device-fridges, cars, missiles, you name it. At last mankind has found a language that all humans understand and as a result can make exponential progress in building its new and latest Towers of Babel.

> And there is the danger. We think we can defeat God and subvert his will for us.

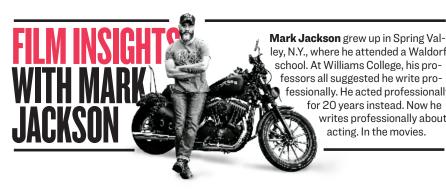
> Of course, the secularists don't believe in God or the gods, but even John Grayan atheist philosopher–said: "Secular thinkers have turned to a belief in progress that is further removed from the basic facts of life than any religious myth."

> In other words, the building of the Tower of Babel is one more example of a colossal mistake that will have dire consequences. As Ayn Rand expressed it: "We can evade reality, but we cannot evade the consequences of reality." There's the rub: The modern dream of progress is just that–a dream, a fantasy, a false myth that needs to be deconstructed for what it is.

> The Tower of Babel, on the other hand, is an enduring myth that speaks true. And if from this we wish to consider a solution to the current impasse we are in, then we need go no further than to the root problem: "facts" as a substitute for "truth."

> When people, when cultures start to value truth, then the facts resume their proper place in the scheme of things, and the dangerous, utopian fantasies begin to recede. So let us look at the traditional myths with new eyes, new hearts, and new minds, and let us em-

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Did You Know Bad Apartment Soundscapes Can Make You Sick?

MARK JACKSON

n "The Sound of Silence," Peter Sarsgaard plays a man who "tunes" people's apartments. What's that?

Maybe you feel sick and maybe you heard from a friend of a friend about a guy who comes over to your apartment, wanders around striking tuning forks, listens meditatively, fiddles with faucets, knocks on walls, scribbles notes ... and voilà: He diagnoses that your toaster is audially out of tune with your refrigerator. Maybe together the appliances create dissonance in the form of a tritone–the "Devil's interval."

"Like the Beast, it goes by many names: 'Diabolus in musica' (devil in music), the devil's interval, the tritone, the triad and the flatted fifth. As its Latin moniker suggests, it's an evil sounding combination of notes that's designed to create a chilling or foreboding atmosphere," as Fender.com puts it.

The prescription? Buy a new toaster and your depression will disappear.

The magic of this movie is that, especially as a New Yorker, you wonder why you haven't heard of this guy before. This is a classic, neurotic, therapy-rife, New Yorker type thing: "So, what do you do?" "Well I'm a musician, but my sideline is house-tuning." This fictitious, audial feng shui profession is probably taking root someplace in Brooklyn as we speak.

"The Sound of Silence" is secondarily a minuscule romance, which Peter Sarsgaard and Rashida Jones nail, given what they have to work with, but it's a scanty script. All in all, though, it's a quiet little story that contains a wallop of a potential healing lesson for humanity, and as far as I'm concerned, that's one of the premier functions of good art.

Can Sound Actually Cause Illness?

some actual science, titled "Why Do Some Sounds Make People Sick?" by Andrew La-Sane: "... low-frequency resonance affects the body ... Vibration leads to both voluntary and involuntary contractions of muscles, and can cause local muscle fatigue ... "

So it's not just pseudoscience–good sound can heal, and bad sound can wreak havoc. This fact is intuitable throughout this film and gives it a grounded feel.

Peter Lucian (Sarsgaard) has an rare, exquisite talent for hearing. He's like Dr. Seuss's rabbit in "The Big Brag": "Do you know what I heard? Do you see that far mountain ...? It's ninety miles off. There's a fly on that mountain. I just heard him cough."

Peter followed his bliss as a self-taught scientist. He's got a methodology, he's taking measurements, and he's charting sounds. In fact, he's charting all of Manhattan's various districts according to their soundscapes. He's got a big, labeled map of it hanging in his former bomb shelter of an apartment, and he's hired a Ph.D. candidate as an assistant. Peter's going to write a scientific treatise, he's going to stake his flag, and he's going to put house-tuning on the map,

Sarsgaard delivers a nuanced, highly believable performance.

When the Hero Falls off the Cliff, He Finds the Ally

This is a Hero's Journey tale of taking the path less trodden. And all goes well for a time. But then he reaches the stage of the journey where the hero falls of the cliff: Ellen Chasen (Rashida Jones) hires him to ing of "Can sound cause ill- | tune her apartment. She's in the throes of | ness?" turns up an article that pulls together | depression and feeling exhausted because | There's a subplot about corporate entre- | thought.



Peter Sarsgaard as a "house tuner" in "The Sound of Silence."

'The Sound of Silence'

Starring

Peter Sarsgaard, Rashida Jones, Tony Revolori, Austin Pendleton, Bruce Altman, Tina Benko

Running Time 1 hour, 25 minutes

Release Date

she's unable to let go of an old relationship. Peter shows up, does his diagnosing thing, prescribes a new toaster ... annnnd-no go. Doesn't work at all. Her exhaustion is not cured. She's not buying his method.

This coincides with Peter's doing a bit of networking and having the premier scientist in his field (whom he idolizes) more or less diss him as a quack.

His world unravels. He clangs his tuning forks repeatedly in desperation in Central Park, walking in circles, unable anymore to hear what he used to think he heard; his world goes into a tailspin, and he flings the tools of his trade to the ground.

Perhaps he fancies himself a scientist but what he really does ... is art?

This is why Ellen enters Peter's life. She provides the missing piece, which is perhaps the fact that he's too unbalanced and out of touch with the people whose sound problems he's attempting to diagnose. He must grow as a person before the journey can be completed. He's comfortable with objects and things–faucets, radiators, and soundscapes-but uncomfortable with people. The Hero's Journey calls for wellroundedness, and out-of-the-comfort-zone

lifelong repercussions on the boy's life.

First, he comforts a dying man and prom-

preneurs drawn like moths to Peter's flame, who'd like nothing more than to slickly package his vision and sell it as patented sound-customization for living spaces-bespoke health-soundscaping, as it were.

Peter's, of course, a purist and not in it for the money; he's deeply insulted and repelled by such a sordidly capitalist concept. Cliché, but well-played by Sarsgaard.

Sarsgaard delivers a nuanced, highly believable performance, depicting the range of humility of such a man, and an intractable personality, tinged with delusions of grandeur and ego, which paradoxically accompany those with this kind of groundbreaking talent.

The relationship, though, is a tad too facile and predictable. Will Peter eventually realize his dream? Or will the dour, nonidealistic outlook that commerce ultimately

As mentioned, the strength of this film is that it will get people thinking about their personal feng shui. It is said, in certain Eastern philosophical interpretations, that all inanimate objects existing in our physical dimension (such as leaves, walls, trash cans, etc.) have multiple layers that exist simultaneously in other dimensions, and in those dimensions everything is alive and can talk to you. That is, should you learn, like Neo in "The Matrix," to enter other dimensions.

And so maybe we need to ask ourselves, "Do I need this sweater I haven't worn in years? Is it unhappy in another dimension? Would it feel more like it was fulfilling its sweater destiny if I donated it to the homeless? Is my refrigerator unhappy containing that carton of completely rancid milk? Is any object in my living space that doesn't have a meaning and purpose a happy object? Or is it perhaps radiating soundwaves of stagnation and boredom?"

Our environment reflects us, which in-

FILM REVIEW

A Perplexing, Heart-Drubbing, Self-Important Drama

IAN KANE

irector John Crowley's new tearoogged drama, "The Goldfinch," is probably one of the most anticipated film adaptations of a literary work in the past decade. The film is the transmogrified version (adapted by screenwriter Peter Straughan) of author Donna Tartt's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel of the same name, which rocked the literary world, selling millions of copies since its launch back in 2013. It's a sprawling, 800-plus-page wouldbe epic that I found overly convoluted and

characters' despair and hopelessness. I'd hoped that the film would fare a little better, since adapting a book to film can do wonders for a granular literary narrative, often paring back on the unnecessary or confusing bits until it emerges sleeker and

needlessly sentimental, wallowing in its

more refined. Trimming the fat, if you will. However, with its bloated cast of A-list actors adding to the film's perceived importance, and all of the pressure on the filmmakers to deliver a product that ravenous fans of Tartt's book could be satiated by, the film's prospects seemed doubtful.

Adding Convoluted Storytelling to a **Convoluted Plot**

"The Goldfinch" tells the story of a 13-yearold boy, Theo Decker (Oakes Fegley), who loses his mother due to a terrorist bombing at the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art. Just as Theo is looking at the titular painting, Carel Fabritius's 1654 masterpiece "The Goldfinch," the explosion erupts. In the immediate aftermath of the catastrophe two things happen, both of which will have



Director John Crowley Starring

The Goldfinch'

Rated

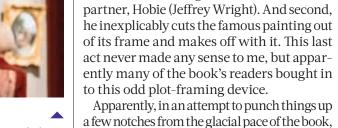
Ansel Elgort,

Nicole Kidman

Running Time Release Date

 \star

'The Goldfinch' is yet another example of a work of literature that didn't translate well onto the silver screen.



Ansel Elgort the filmmakers decided on nonlinear storystars as Theo telling. This method can have its advantages as Decker, who far as keeping fickle audiences occupied, but suffered a the tortuous, back-and-forth chronology in trauma when he this film is more confounding than anything was 13, in "The else. It really hinders the film's pacing. Goldfinch."

taken in by the family of his late mother's childhood friend, Mrs. Barbour (Nicole Kidman). His new, extremely well-off family offers a quantum of icy solace, but nothing in the way of real warmth or compassion.

Before we even get to know these new characters to any discernible degree, Theo is off to find Hobie and fulfill the dying man's wish. Shortly after that, Theo reconnects with Pippa (Ashleigh Cummings), the young girl (Aimee Laurence) he had noticed at the museum, which results in a half-baked romantic subplot. From there, we are whisked away to Las Vegas, where Theo attempts to settle into a new life with his estranged, hard-partying father Larry (Luke Wilson) and his grubby

Soon after the tragic bombing, Theo is

girlfriend Xandra (Sarah Paulson). Interspersed with Theo's childhood are present-day scenes in which Theo has "blossomed" into a pill-popping, booze-swilling, grief-addled man (Ansel Elgort), who is also a successful antiques dealer.

Despite his material achievements, Theo has always been bound to his childhood ises to deliver a ring to the man's business trauma, just as "The Goldfinch" painting portrays a goldfinch being bound to its feeder by a chain. (What a metaphor!)

Spoiler alert for the movie: The reason that Theo and his mother were visiting the museum that fateful day was because he'd been caught smoking at school. If not for his bad-boy behavior and the consequent scheduled visit to the principal's office, he and his mom would not have been passing some time by browsing among her favorite paintings. Hence Theo's guilty feelings. The filmmakers opted to save the terrorist bombing of the museum until the very end of the movie, which is a little odd because it is such a big part of the trailer. Were it shown at the outset of the film, we might have felt more invested in Theo's character and more

sympathetic to his trials and tribulations. "The Goldfinch," then, is yet another example of a work of literature that didn't translate well onto the silver screen. In this case, part of it is due to the labyrinthine source material. The other part is that the film itself tries to convince audiences of its own self-importance, as if overly convoluted storytelling can pass off as either artistic or imaginative. To me, the most interesting thing about the film was the painting itself. There is a scene where Hobie lectures Theo on how to discern a fake antique from a masterpiece. I think that his piece of unintentional irony sums up the entire film quite nicely.

Ian Kane is a filmmaker and author based out of Los Angeles, California. To see more, visit DreamFlightEnt.com



'Betrayal'

MARC BRENNER

Bernard B. Jacobs Theatre 242 W. 45th St., New York

Tickets 212-239-6200 or Telecharge.com

Running Time 1 hour, 30 minutes

(no intermission)

Closes
Dec. 8

The audience sees what basically amounts to a slow and inexorable train wreck these people make of their lives.

(L-R) Charlie Cox, Zawe Ashton, and Tom Hiddleston star in "Betrayal," pictured here in London's Harold Pinter Theatre. The sparseness and muted colors of the set and costumes focus audience attention on the nuances of the characters' relationships.

JUDD HOLLANDER

EW YORK—By the end of the Broadway revival of Harold Pinter's 1978 play "Betrayal," there are no winners, only survivors. The work has arrived in New York, with the cast intact, after an acclaimed run in London.

As gallery owner Emma (Zawe Ashton) explains to her former lover Jerry (Charlie Cox), her marriage of more than a decade to Robert (Tom Hiddleston) appears to have come to an end. During this marriage, there have been infidelities on both sides, most importantly the married Jerry's seven-year affair with Emma.

Emma and Robert have come completely clean with each other, much to the consternation of Jerry, who is Robert's oldest friend. Jerry wonders how he will be able to face Robert now that the truth

has come out.

With this information as a starting point, the play unfolds in an intricate but nonlinear fashion. It flashes back in time, and then creeps forward a bit before going back even further as the interactions between these three are explored. For "Betrayal" is not only about the eventual collapse of Emma and Robert's marriage. It's about the relationships that Emma, Robert, and Jerry have with one another, and how each is tested in its own way.

While the play mostly explores the Emma and Jerry side of the triangle, it's made perfectly clear that Robert is no angel either. The audience sees what basically amounts to a slow and inexorable train wreck these people make of their lives. And we learn as well of those who become collateral damage: the unseen Judith, Jerry's wife; and the children

from the two marriages.

One of the strongest elements of Jamie Lloyd's direction was the decision to strip down the production and keep all three characters on stage for most of the play, even when all three aren't in a particular scene. Any character not involved in a sequence is positioned so that his or her presence is still clearly felt—as though the third person is always in the thoughts of the other two.

The scenic design by Soutra Gilmour works very well here. Her set, for the most part, consists of only two straight-backed chairs and an occasional prop. The stark lighting design by Jon Clark more than ably sets the mood. The elements all come together perfectly, particularly during the play's final moments.

It is to Pinter's credit that because of the way the narrative unfolds, the audience knows more of what's going on and is able to interpret cer-

tain comments or actions quite differently from that of the characters themselves. This dynamic becomes especially clear during a hilarious scene with Robert and Jerry at lunch, when they express feelings of anger and bewilderment. Eddie Arnold adds some extra comic relief here as a waiter.

Hiddleston comes off as the most sympathetic of the three leads, despite his character's earlier self-proclaimed shortcomings. The pain is clearly etched on his face during an emotionally devastating, physically quiet scene where exactly what this betrayal means comes through in full force.

Cox brings some interesting light-heartedness to the story as Jerry, though completely unintentional from the point of view of the character. Jerry is somewhat dim, either due to his actual blind spots, such as his attempting to claim the moral

high when he has no business doing so, or because he can't fully express himself without revealing something he wants to keep hidden.

Ashton does a quite good job in bringing Emma to life, both as a sensual being and a person who does not want to let herself be defined by the two men. It's also the most difficult role in the play, as Pinter is more interested in explaining what is happening rather than the character's motives.

An excellent study of human failings, this revival of "Betrayal" is nothing less than engrossing. The only true winners are those fortunate enough to see this revival before it concludes its limited run.

Judd Hollander is a reviewer for Stagebuzz.com and a member of the Drama Desk and the Outer Critics Circle. He can be reached at bnchpeop@aol.com





