Words To Live By

200 hundred years ago William Hazlitt said, Words are the only things that last forever. Here are our **Words To Live By** and we hope they last also. In this one simple booklet are those words. Think of them not just as words, but as **maxims** or **words of wisdom**. They are divided into five sections, **Personal Relations, Personal Success, Your Job, Your Happiness, Epilogue**. Until now, we had never written them down, but did live by them as a normal part of our lives. Most are followed by an explanation and some are **bold.** Reading them now, and following them, makes our lives better and others around us.

We hope they will do the same for you
To our family and friends we love.
Toots and Pots (Rhealene and Erik Lessing), Christmas 2026

Personal Relations

Be the first to say **hello—**and say it with a **smile**

Offer a firm handshake and look people in the eye

Ask people about themselves

The greatest gift you can give someone is your attention

Learn to listen

A smile is contagious. When Ben Bowker and I were bartenders at the Peninsula House in Sea Bright, NJ in 1960, we made a point of smiling at everyone. It worked—and many customers mentioned how much they appreciated it and became loyal regulars.

Remember other people's names. Everyone likes to hear their name—use it.

To be interesting, be interested

Avoid the over-using I and me and use we and us when appropriate. Few things turn people off faster than someone who talks only about themselves or about things only they care about.

Never miss an opportunity to say thank you or offer a sincere compliment

A person who feels appreciated will always do more than is expected

My mother, Alice, often said, if you can't say something nice, don't say anything. Thumper's line in Disney's *Bambi* (1942) was if you can't say somethin' nice don't say nothin' at all.

Laughter is the best medicine

Be one who sees a need and acts before being asked

Humility is thinking about yourself less…Ted Lasso

Humility is centered on others, not yourself

Earn trust through restraint, responsibility and genuine concern for others.

Putting others first does not diminish you; it elevates both you and those around you. When people know that their needs and interests matter to you, they value you more deeply, and relationships become stronger, richer, and more meaningful.

Be trusting—and value those who have earned your trust.

Have a great attitude

Judge others by the content of their character…Martin Luther King

Personal relationships are built on **conversation**, but great **conversations** are built on **listening**. Most people want to talk, not listen, but success is when everyone has an opportunity to contribute. So, with 2 people, talk ½ the time, with 5, talk 1/5 the time. You get the idea. The larger the group, the less time you get to talk. Avoid dominating the conversation. **Pause often to let others speak.**

Every conversation shapes the relationship you have with another person. Recognize its importance—it shapes how you and others value the relationship. How well you speak and, more importantly, how well you listen determines the respect, appreciation, and enjoyment you create with others.

Tell me are two words to use often, asking others about themselves and inviting them to speak

Use the word l**ove** often

Love isn't just a feeling—it's a choice

Falling in **love** is when you leave, you want to see that person again…even though you just left…Anonymous

Personal Success

Success is liking yourself, liking what you do, and liking how you do it

Be the most positive and enthusiastic person you know

Remember people's names

Make others feel appreciated

Courtesy is a small act with a mighty punch

Talk to strangers. What a wonderful opportunity to meet others, some like you, others different but interesting. Don't be afraid to smile or say hello. You'd be amazed at how many people smile back. Often a **conversation** ensues.

In 1966 or so, I was skiing alone in Vail's back bowls and only one other skier was waiting to board Lift 5. We nodded and said hi and got on the 2-man chair together for the 15-minute ride up. I glanced down at his ski tips and saw the name **Scott Carpenter** who I instantly recognized as one of America's original seven astronauts. We had a wonderful conversation. Had his name not been on his skis, or had we not said hello, what a missed opportunity that would have been.

Live beneath your means

Value your time. It is essential for your success.

Be the change you want to see in the world…Mahatma Gandhi

Leave everything better than you found it

Be an open book. Secretiveness destroys relationships.

Be outgoing—you will meet more interesting people

You're never wrong to do the right thing

Make your bed. This starts your morning with an accomplishment… Admiral William McRaven

Have Will Power. Nothing is more important for tackling the toughest challenges in life.

Keep it simple. We all tend to make things too complex. Make it easier for yourself and everyone around you.

Well done, is better than well said…Benjamin Franklin

Whatever you do, give 100%. Unless you're donating blood…Bill Murray

Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity…Seneca

Chance favors the prepared mind…Louis Pasteur

Be adventurous. Never be afraid to try something new.

Don't accept the status quo. Challenge assumptions and never take things for granted.

Make any proposal fit on one page. Winston Churchill made this a requirement for any proposal from his subordinates during WWII. You should too.

Be inquisitive. *"I keep six honest serving-men (they taught me all I knew); their names are What and Why and When and How and Where and Who*…Rudyard Kipling

Ask questions repeatedly. You can learn forever.

Be curious about everything

Never give up. **Persevere**. Results will come.

Prioritize. Always do the most important tasks first—even though they aren't the most interesting or fun.

Never procrastinate, just do it... Will Bowen

Be prepared. It's not just the Boy Scouts marching song—it applies to everyday life.

Leave everything better than you found it

Commit yourself to quality

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure

Write it down. To never forget something, put it on paper or on your phone…Ron Kolar

Never be afraid to say I don't know, I made a mistake, I need help, or I'm sorry

Delayed gratification is the ability to sacrifice a small reward today for a greater reward tomorrow. It is one of the most important keys to success, personal growth, and meaningful contribution to others. Unfortunately, many people choose immediate satisfaction rather than long-term benefit, and they often pay the price for that decision later in life.

Create something beautiful with your hands

Don't litter. It reflects poorly on you. And don't hesitate to pick it up. I Saw Bill Terry, an Executive VP at HP pick up litter just before he entered HP headquarters in Palo Alto. My kind of guy.

There are lots of disappointments in life, roll with the punches

Read **How to Make Friends and Influence People** by Dale Carnegie. Carnegie interviewed a man surrounded by women. He asked how he did it. His answer, somewhat shortened was, I ask them questions about themselves. Always ask people **about themselves**. They always know the answer and appreciate that you care.

Be well spoken. The best and simplest way to do this is get a copy of **The Elements of Style** by Wiliam Strunk and E.B. White. The third edition is best. Never has so much good advice about talking and writing been packed into such a small book.

For a successful marriage: find the right person, be the right person

Instead of using the word, problem, try opportunity

Fortune favors the bold

Be optimistic about what you do—better things tend to happen when you are

See the humor in things. When you think something is funny, others will enjoy it too.

What's wrong with this picture? I make this observation many times and often there is nothing I can do—but sometimes it alerts me to a problem I can fix.

The Power of Positive Thinking. Employ this in your everyday thinking and you will be amazed at the results.

Always be on time. If not, you are showing rudeness saying my time is valuable, but yours is not.

Be reliable. There are times when life throws an extenuating circumstance at you, but that is 2% to 3% of the time. Be there as you promised all the time.

Always be on time. If not, you are showing rudeness saying my time is valuable, but yours is not.

Rudeness is everywhere. Yet Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon, N.H. is a great example of doing it right—The doctors show up for appointments 5 minutes early.

My dad, Arthur, worked 42 years at the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Co., the Walmart of its day, and he told me many times that **the customer is always right.**

Above all, have the right attitude about everything

Be pithy—in speech or writing be brief, forceful, and meaningful

Failure is not a sin. Failure to try is…Robert H. Schuller

Less is more. It's about precision, clarity and the elimination of the non-essential...Ludwig Mies van der Rohe et al

Put proposals on one page. Winston Churchill required this of his subordinates during WWII.

God is in the details. True excellence emerges from careful attention to the smallest elements...Ludwig Mies van der Rohe et al

Know the wolf. Don't depend on the government giving you things. Prepare yourself for life's uncertainties...C.A.Bewley

Always look on the bright side

Read the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

Be a true American: You were lucky to have been born in America. The founders had it right. Less government and more freedom for everyone to succeed.

What endures is what is built slowly, repaired often and carried with dignity. Think of our dining room table.

Your Job

Give your best to your employer

Stand when greeting visitors to your office

Answer the phone with enthusiasm and energy in your voice

When meeting someone for the first time, say your name, and be sure to ask for theirs

Arrive at work early and stay a little beyond quitting time

Do it right the first time

Under promise and over deliver

Don't delay acting on a good idea. Success often comes to one who moves first.

Make people you work with feel appreciated

Do everything you can to help your boss succeed. His success will become yours also.

Be his friend and don't be afraid to engage him.

Manage by walking around. A key tenet at HP. It shows you are interested in what your people do and you can help if needed.

You never get a second chance to make a first impression

If you want something done, give it to a busy person

Love and work, work and love, that's all there Is…Sigmund Freund

You earn the joy of working that discipline brings you…Wynton Marsalis

Your Happiness

Have a dog or a cat or bunnies (as Alyssa Cuellar, one of our superb Home Helpers has in her home)

Cultivate plants and flowers and plant them every spring. Their beauty and fragrance lift your spirits and make life happier.

Have a fireplace in your house—you'll love it in the winter

Be outdoors on decks or patios so you're outside often. In good weather Rhealene and I are outside every day, especially for cocktails before dinner.

The early bird gets the worm. Drive, shop, and get things done in the morning—few people are out and everything is easier, quicker, and better.

Life would be senseless without music...Friedrich Nietzsche

Rekindle old friendships. Few things have given me more pleasure than the 15 years the 1960 class of Phi Gamma Delta at Cornell met annually.

I wish I had gotten smarter earlier in life.

About 1 year after we were married, Rhealene asked me, why did you marry me? I said, because I love talking with you. 61 years later I still do.
Always talk **with** someone, never talk to someone

Have many hobbies

Walking is great exercise throughout life's many years. You can do it with groups or alone, and It becomes especially valuable in old age.

Stay interested in the things you love

Have many friends and be good to every one of them

Be involved in many sports. Not only is it great exercise but it connects you with friends.

Be outside as much as you can. Nothing brings you closer to Mother Nature.

It doesn't matter...until it does. When you're older, falling is the worst thing that can happen to you. Treat it with respect.

Keep both oars in the water

Stop complaining, be happy and joyous.

Be there when people need you

For when The One Great Scorer comes to mark against your name, He writes not if you won or lost—but how you played the game…Grantland Rice

Epilogue

Humility is thinking about yourself less…Ted Lasso

Humility is centered on someone else, not yourself

Earn trust through restraint, responsibility and genuine concern for others. **Putting others first** does not diminish you; it elevates both you and those around you. When people know that their needs and interests matter to you, they value you more deeply, and relationships become stronger, richer, and more meaningful.

These 4 definitions of **putting others first**, and **conversation**, are, undoubtably, the most important of all definitions on the previous pages. If you take nothing else from the previous 124 previous words to live by, let it be this: **putting others first**, and **mastering conversation.**

Interaction among people is defined through **conversation**. Talking with others is how we communicate, how we connect, and how we shape every relationship in our lives.