

TAKE TIME TO _____

Inspiration can arrive at any time. For about twenty years I had this Old English Prayer, Author Unknown, hanging on a wall in my office. I read it occasionally and I always delighted in it, but it never fully registered in my preoccupied brain. Somewhat similar to that old saying, "He catches onto Friday night's jokes on Sunday morning."

We recently moved to a new home and we hung this Old English Prayer on a wall where I now read it each morning while doing some stretching and isometric exercises. The timeless wisdom of "Take Time to ___" has now penetrated into my inmost being. I hope the same for you. Of course, since we are only built for one day at a time, we do need to read it daily in a thoughtful manner.

Take Time to Think. It is the source of power. How often do we slow down enough to think deeply about any issue of concern to us? Our frantic pace allows little or no time for reflective thinking. We would have to schedule it on our daily calendar.

Take Time to Play. It is the secret of perpetual youth. Play renews us. Playing catch with a ball is renewing. Without some sort of daily play we become crusty and dry. For some, it is work first, and then play. For others, it is the opposite.

Take Time to Read. It is the fountain of wisdom. Are we reading in depth, fiction or non-fiction, or is it brief, cursory and superficial? Do we finish reading refreshed and enriched or empty and flat? Again, how do we allocate our time?

Take Time to Pray. It is the greatest power on earth. For the believer, this is solid. For the skeptic, substitute goal setting, visualization, and positive thinking. Positivity is miraculous whether you are a believer or a skeptic.

Take Time to Love and Be Loved. It is a God given privilege. Erich Fromm's classic book, The Art of Loving, explores love in depth. Remember Whitney Houston's hit song, "The Greatest Love of All?" The first challenge is loving ourselves and then accepting love from others.

Take Time to be Friendly. It is the road to happiness. My loving mother repeatedly instructed me to say hello to people. Recent research underlines this truth in that even brief, pleasant contact with other people is extremely therapeutic. We feel better! Amazing! Wonderful!

Take Time to Laugh. It is the music of the soul. Since I have been reading this Old English Prayer daily and meditatively, I have noticed that I laugh more often and more fully. Our computer brains believe whatever software we install. We need all the laughter we can muster.

Take Time to Give. It is too short a day to be selfish. As we age, are we becoming more selfish or more selfless? Maybe we need a healthy balance of giving and receiving. Erik Erikson theorizes that in life's final stage we achieve "Ego Integrity" (fulfillment) or "Despair" (unacceptance).

Take Time to Work. It is the price of success. We Americans work more and vacation less than other Western industrialized nations. We are experts at

overworking! We need to find ways to make our work more meaningful. We would be wise to develop and disseminate a positive philosophy or theology of work.

Take Time to do Charity. It is the key to heaven. As we age we probably have more available time to volunteer and give back to our society, which has given so much to us. Most of us know in our hearts the wisdom and truth contained in the Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi, 1182-1226, "For it is in giving that we receive."

One Additional Thought

Take Time to Meditate. It is the pathway to our deepest self, our true self. In psychology we say that meditation opens the door into our unconscious mind, which is powerful and wants to heal us. We strengthen our observational self and connect with our intrinsic goodness, just in being. In theology, we say that meditation consists of experiencing God present within us. Psalm 46 says, "Be still and know that I am God."

One Final Thought

Take time to thoughtfully read this Old English Prayer, author Unknown, daily. It is a certain route to operationalizing or actually doing the ten pleasures specified. What a wonderful, effortless way to enrich our lives! This self-programming will enlarge our repertoire of skills. Start today!

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