

CONTINUED TO EXIST

Life Advice for the Horseshit World

By Adam Gnade

I keep thinking about how being patient with people is one of the greatest gifts you can give. It's something almost everyone wants. When you need it, you really need it, and when someone is being pushy or impatient with you, it's so much harder on you than the imposition is on them. We're all dealing with so much bullshit and pain. With that in mind, you being patient helps relieve (at least in small measures) some of the world's collective bullshit and pain. That's so much more important than you getting something done on your own (often arbitrary) timeline.

You should try every day to give someone (and I mean, anyone, a friend, a stranger, somebody at the gas station you'll never see again) a reason to say, "Man, I fuckin' love people" because there are a lot of fuckheads very actively doing the opposite.

I've been thinking a lot about how some of us need a guide on a path more than the path itself.

This morning in a book I read the words "Continued to text" as "Continued to exist" and liked that idea. Felt important. Like, "Life is hard, but I continued to exist." Or "Life update. Continued to exist."

You're probably doing something good you're not giving yourself credit for. Maybe you're doing something great? I think a lot of times when people are doing great things they're not really seeing it. This does not apply to creeps, fascists, shitty bullies, sketchy bros, warlords, bigots, and general fuckheads. Any good acts of a vile person are made vile by their general fuckheadedness.

It's good to have a list of people you don't want to let down and to think often of not letting them down.

In this current shitstorm it's easy to get overwhelmed by what might happen tomorrow or next week or forty years from now. Maybe you're like this too—I'm obsessed with the future. Obsessed to the point of complete derailment. This is something I force myself to remember: for the most part we have no idea what will happen in the future, and sometimes knowing this can create its own kind of weird, illogical optimism. I hope you're okay.

One of the worst things I can think of to be remembered as is someone who once tried their best every day to do big things (and believed in their potential to do those big things) then stopped because they wanted an easier, less stressful, more financially secure life.

Social media is both a useful tool and a public restroom where everyone rubs their own shit on the walls and pisses on the floor. Staying too long in a shitty, pissy public restroom will make us smell like piss and shit (and after a while that won't wash out). We shouldn't waste our very short lives scrolling through unimportant things we won't remember tomorrow.

The people I like best are the ones who care very deeply and try very hard no matter the outcome. Courage is a rare commodity even in the best of times. We often call people “brave” for doing things that don’t require a lot of bravery. True courage is elemental. The kind of courage I’m speaking of here is deathless because it lives on after defeat. Courage with humane, non-oppressive intent or purpose is one of the finest things you can have.

One of the worst things a person can have in them is arrogance. One of the best is the ability to admit when we've been wrong (or stupid or unfair or shortsighted or lazy in our thought process). We're all a work in progress, and once we decide we're not that's when we begin to die or at least diminish. Don't build up a statue of yourself because statues fall. Vulnerability is truth, and real truth is hard to know but incorruptible. Never be afraid to say, "I was wrong."

This is a note-to-self, but maybe it's a note to you as well: Be patient with people. Just because they haven't answered that email doesn't mean they're a bad person. That driver going too slow or too fast on the highway maybe has a reason that's more important than your inconvenience. We all know what it's like to be in a stupid, shitty situation. Don't be so quick to judge. Your judgmental thoughts are wasting your time and turning you into the kind of pushy, impatient asshole you wouldn't like.

It's time to slow down. Begin right now.

It's harder to care, but it's better. Life is very short and some of us will lose ours way too soon. Stop building a wall to stand behind. Courage and open-hearted humor in the middle of pain is admirable. Ironic detachment and head-in-the-sand disinterest is boring, easy, and gross. Most people are worth your concern. Most governments and political organizations are not. Care about people. Screaming at others isn't helping, but neither is pretending you don't care. The best thing you can be is gentle, receptive, and loving.

For years I thought I hated most people, but in the isolation of the pandemic I figured out I was just afraid of confrontation. Now I don't give a fuck and the result is I like almost everyone. The people I do hate will never win me back no matter how hard they try. Those are enemies for life and that's fine. It's okay to have enemies, but if you have more enemies than friends, something's wrong and you should take a good, hard look at whether or not you're a total piece of shit.

Don't worry so much about "getting everything done" today. Help your friends and family instead. Put your ambition aside for a while.

Today do your best with tremendous, defiant, magnificent style.

I feel like the people who think they're the most interesting are often the most boring and the people who think they're the most boring can be the most interesting people you'll ever meet.

There are days or weeks or even months when it feels as if everything that can go wrong is going wrong (and wrong in ways you never thought to expect). Remember that all of us go through these periods of total annihilation. And when you're not going through it? This is important: You must be a pillar to lean against while your loved ones stand on uncertain ground.

This is a reminder to check in on your friends and family today. Just that. Text your sister. Call your band-mate. Drop by and say hello. Be human with those around you. We all know Capitalism wants to drag us apart from each other because as our solitary selves we're weaker and much easier to manage. Always remember that sticking with your community is an important act of defiance. The state wants you working productively and relying on it for all your needs. Any resistance to that is powerful in its own small way. It's an obvious thing, but it's easy to forget. Stay in touch.

We're all at war in some way or another. Look for ways to make peace inside your own small world.

I only like people if they're either a bad-ass or weird. If you're neither, you're not interesting. If you're both, the world needs more of you for the sake of its own decreased sanity.

For you I wish the impossible dream of a day with no disasters.

Stop wasting your time. (Or start. But do it better.)

You're worrying too much about it right now. Relax and let it happen.

The burden of existence hangs heavy some days. I know it's a cliché to be like, "We're all trying our best" or to (ever) invoke "we're all"s or pander to universality and assumed systematic connection. But from what I've seen, yeah, we are all trying our best. Be easy on yourself today (and be easy on those around you). Cut yourself and others some mercy from the cloth you never stop weaving. It's okay to come in from the cold.

Since the pandemic I've had two predominate, reoccurring thoughts. "Goddamn it I'm so tired" and "No. Nope. Fuck it. I'm doin' this."

I hope you catch a break. That's all. Just any small win. Something that makes all this stupid fucking work and struggle and worry feel worthwhile.

Don't give up.

Sometimes the boring parts of us are what make us interesting. I think one of the most interesting things you could know about a person would be to read their grocery lists. Every once in a while I'll find one in a parking lot outside the grocery store on a trip to town and when that happens you're given this weird, awkward, unedited, intimate look into a stranger's life. You can break people into two groups—spies and not spies. Some are curious about the people around us. Others don't care. I definitely care and I hope you care too. It's better to care. In all aspects of life. Care. Keep yourself open. Be a camera, a detective, and a satellite. The world (and most people) can be wildly interesting if you care enough to look. The negative forces of life try their best to crush out our desire to look and to care. They want us useful, orderly, and pliant. Don't let that happen. Write this in your notebook and tattoo it on the back of your hand—ALWAYS CARE.

Every fall I'm reminded of how getting warm after you've been cold is one of the sweetest pleasures of this often grueling, shitty life.

What I wish for you is an easy day today. No bombs dropping from unexpected heights to fuck up your life. No unwelcome surprises. No phone calls you don't want and no shitty roadblocks to keep you from your destination. There's a difference between taking it easy and having it go easy. The first is a choice and a luxury. The second is a gift. I hope you get the gift of an easy day.

When I'm with the ones I love it feels like the world will never end. When I'm alone and thinking clearly it feels like the world is fucked but we will fix this. When I go on Instagram it feels like the world is ending, but somehow no one has noticed. When I go on Facebook I think, "Holy fuck, just let the world end already."

Your fortune cookie says, "It's time to do big things."

Life is moving so fast I feel like I'm missing out on all the good shit—the quiet moments, the slow hours watching a rainstorm roll in, uncounted time spent writing a letter to a friend, the long dinners where you talk until late, sweet mornings when you have no plans and no desire to make them. On the back of my hand I write, "Slow down." In my notebook I write, "Slow down" (and underline it three times). I tell myself this, "Slow down. Live better. Quit wasting your short life. You will regret the many hours of your life you have wasted with unsatisfying, inconsequential garbage. The purpose of life is to live. It's time to live."