

Find Your Marigolds at Work, Home, and Life

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Welcome to Life! Think of the hardest thing you have ever done. Maybe it is something you are facing right now. These types of trials will test you more intensely than just about anything you've ever done. It will deplete all your energy, bring you to tears, and make you question every thing you have ever known. But all these tests, if you approach them the right way, will leave you better and stronger than you are today.

Don't forget to follow this one essential rule: *Surround yourself with good people.*

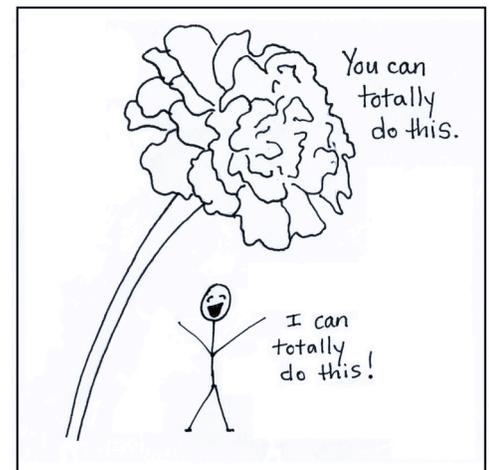
By finding the positive, supportive, energetic people and sticking close to them, you can improve your job, home, and life satisfaction more than with any other strategy. And your chances of excelling at any trial will skyrocket. Just like a young seedling growing in a garden, thriving in life depends largely on who you plant yourself next to.

THE MARIGOLD EFFECT: Many experienced gardeners follow a concept called *companion planting*: placing certain vegetables and plants near each other to improve growth for one or both plants. For example, rose growers plant garlic near their roses because it repels bugs and prevents fungal diseases. Among companion plants, the marigold is one of the best: It protects a wide variety of plants from pests and harmful weeds. If you plant a marigold beside most any garden vegetable, that vegetable will grow big and strong and healthy, protected and encouraged by its marigold.

Marigolds exist in our lives as well – encouraging, supporting and nurturing friends encouraging us on to maturity. If you can find at least ONE marigold in your life and stay close to them, you will grow. Find more than one and you will positively thrive.

Few people will be lucky enough to be planted close to a marigold. You will have to seek them out. You can identify them by the way they greet you or by the way their offer to help sounds sincere. Or, just by how you feel when you're with them: are you calmer, more hopeful? Excited to take on life? If you feel good around this person, chances are they have some marigold qualities.

Once you've identified your marigolds, make an effort to spend time with them. Having a hard day? Go to your marigolds. Not understanding how you will face this specific trial? Go to your marigolds. Feeling lonely, anxious, depressed, out of sorts? Marigolds. They may be on the other side of the city, out of your neighborhood area, or otherwise less convenient to reach than others. If your life is especially toxic, you might have to find your marigolds in another state, or even online. Make the effort. It's worth the trouble.



BEWARE THE WALNUT TREES: While seeking out your marigolds, you'll need to take note of the walnut trees. Successful gardeners avoid planting vegetables anywhere near walnut trees, which give off a toxic substance that can inhibit growth, wilt, and ultimately kill nearby vegetable plants. And sadly, if your life is like most, walnut trees will be abundant. They may not seem dangerous at first. In fact, some may appear to be good people. But here are some signs that you should keep your distance: Their take on other people is constantly negative. Their take on any type of activity (that is not their idea) is negative. Being around them makes you feel insecure, discouraged, overwhelmed, or embarrassed.

WALNUT TREES ARE POISON. Avoid them whenever you can. If you don't, they will start to infect you, and soon you'll hate life as much as they do.

Doing this may be a challenge: Your boss might be a walnut tree. You may be living with one. You might work on a whole team of walnut trees, spending hours with them every week. Touching base with your marigolds will help flush out the toxins that build up from contact with the walnut trees. On top of that, simply identifying certain people in your life as walnut trees can help dilute their power over you. Of course, be kind, but do not give them the power to taint your view of the world.

So in the spirit of identification, here are some common walnut tree varieties to look out for:

“People-Hatin’ Penny”, who will snort every time you share a positive anecdote about life. She never has anything nice to say about anyone and will quickly talk about you as soon as you leave the room. Spend enough time with her and you’ll believe every person is a lying, cheating little sneak and you’re a fool if you think otherwise.

“Checked-Out Charlie”, who hates the neighborhood and never fails to mention how much better things “used to be”. He is either, 1) overly involved in the community and wants to prevent anything from changing... ever! or, 2) never gets involved in the community and cannot wait to leave his present situation. Charlie will find your enthusiasm about life “cute,” but will then tell you to “just wait...it’ll wear off.”

“My Kids Are the Shiz Tina”, who sets impossibly high standards for her kids and brags about **all** their accomplishments. You had your kids mow the lawn? Tina’s kids mowed the lawn and scrubbed the walls. Your daughter made the honor roll? Tina’s kids have always been on the honor roll. After talking to Tina, you’ll feel the urge to triple your workload and hire someone to complete your child’s science fair project, just so you can feel like an average parent.

“I’m Always Right- Randall”, who **always knows everything about anything and** constantly puts down those with differing opinions and beliefs. He often argues about politics and religion – and even though you sometimes secretly agree with him - his latest Facebook post was so controversial, you had to block him. He often has the latest statistic about something no one cares about. Last I heard he hates puppies and rainbows too.

“Audience Know-it-All”, who is thinking ‘RIGHT NOW’, that I left off someone they KNOW should be on this list.

Be especially vigilant during unique trials, when you’ll find yourself in a veritable forest of walnut trees. It will be the worst when everyone else’s life seems fine, all except for yours. The trees will slowly turn toward the center making snarky know-it-all comments dropping off their branches like walnuts whacking the table. When this happens, recognize that you are surrounded, hold tight to your roots, and remember your marigolds.

GET WHAT YOU CAN, WHERE YOU CAN:

Your search for marigolds will yield imperfect results: Not everyone is all-marigold or all-walnut tree. There will be some in life who just make you happy – go to them for a mood boost. Some who aren’t terribly good at the perfection part, but love life and trying new things – seek them out when you need to be reminded of how much you love life, too. Others will take care of you – encourage you to rest, slack off a little, not beat yourself up. And some who are intensely into the craft, who always have a great strategy on hand– can really help you stretch your abilities. Learn who has what marigold qualities and get what you can from each of them.

Finally, try to find some compassion for the walnut trees. Their toxicity comes from a place of real pain, and they themselves probably fell under the influence of the walnut trees who came before them.

FIND YOUR MARIGOLDS AND STICK CLOSE TO THEM

