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## On Turning Sixty: Counsel From My Inner Wisdom on How to Live

by: **Charles Burack** on October 12th, 2016 | 1 Comment »

*Notes on Turning 60 From Charles Burack*

### Sow Seeds of Gratefulness and Forgiveness

Wake up with thanks on your lips. Throughout the day behold the goodness everywhere, even amidst the pain and violence. See the light within and behind the darkness. Accept what is and support what should be. Nurture the holiness waiting to be born. Appreciate small deeds and seemingly ordinary events, knowing every action creates endless ripples in the ocean of existence and beyond. Prize your life by maintaining healthy habits. Have faith in — and discover for yourself — the sanctity of existence and its boundless Source. Drift off to sleep with gratitude in your heart.

Forgive others who have hurt you and don't let grievances fester. Kindly express your hurt feelings and describe the actions that aggrieve you while refraining from critical judgments and character attacks. Request what you need to repair the connection. Apologize and make amends to those you have hurt. Forgive yourself for your mistakes.

### Be a Disciple of Peace

Take time each day to be still and silent as a tree. Slow down, pay attention to your experience, make inner silence your basic mode of being. Centering practices, such as prayer, meditation, and yoga, bring you to your quiet core. Many people center themselves through relaxed walking, singing, swimming, or spending time in nature. As you rest in the stillness, you may encounter the formless Reality that endlessly generates all forms.

While actively partaking in the world, stay anchored to the peaceful essence of your being. Let part of your awareness rest on your breath at the nose or mouth or in the chest or belly. When a situation calls for thought, toggle between restful witnessing and active thinking. When beset by disturbing thoughts and difficult emotions, mindfully observe them with compassionate interest, allowing their deeper meanings to emerge. When anxious, notice how and where the anxieties show up in your bodily sensations. When angry or fearful, take time out to center yourself. When sad or hurt, be sure to nurture yourself. Learn what you can from your holistic experience. If it reveals you need to take action, do so with wise and compassionate presence. By cultivating peace, you prepare the field where healthy passions and humane relations can flourish.

Seek the greater common ground among opposing forces, aware the world is sustained by a dynamic balance of diverse energies. Explore the shared needs among contending parties, and acknowledge the gifts and challenges

each party brings. Harmonize differences by seeing how they contribute to our shared existence. Let conflicts spur creative, inclusive resolutions.



### **Grow Your Heart Wider Than the World**

Cultivate love, kindness, and compassion. Your greatest joy and contribution to life come from love — a supreme love that embraces all beings and the Source of Being, however you experience and name it. When you become a clear channel of love, you give generously, care tenderly, and act with compassion and goodness. Love heals suffering, rights injustice, builds bonds, and nurtures growth.

Honor the holy light in every person and creature you encounter. When you can't sense the sacred, simply offer the best awareness and action you can and refrain from doing harm. Treat each being as a neighbor, fellow Earth inhabitant, citizen of the cosmos, offspring of the One. Let your love shine on everyone. Show your love by working for equality, justice, and peace.

When you find yourself excessively critical or admiring of another person, reflect on how you too possess similar attributes and actions. Embrace all aspects of your being — light and shadow — and let the Infinite integrate and unfold them. Be open to continuous learning and development.

Let compassion soften your judgments of self and others. Through compassion you realize that most hurtful behavior is motivated by fear and suffering. You discover your deep compassion when you calm yourself, clear your mind, and open your heart. Yet even when you are angry you have the power to bridle your aggression. Let kindness temper your strength. Let mercy leaven your demand for justice.

### **Nurture Your Web of Relationships**

The world is a vast and ever-changing weave of relations, so take care of your connections. Examine your relations with family, friends, neighbors, colleagues, community, society, humanity, the natural world. Identify connections that can be repaired, enhanced, diversified. Deepen intimate ties through tender generosity. Accept that not everyone shares your approach to relationships. Wisely balance your care for others with self-care. Mend bonds that hinder or hurt you. Let go of harmful relationships that cannot be repaired. Report and stop abuse. Refrain from dehumanizing people and demonizing other creatures. Explore ways of befriending — or at least appreciating — seeming foes. Behold the intrinsic worth in every creature and offer your respect.

### **Savor the Taste of Quiet Joy**

Distinguish between fleeting waves of pleasure and the enduring lake of serene contentment. Enjoy pleasures as they arise but avoid craving or grasping them. Savor the unique beauty in every being. Let loving presence bring you to tranquil delight. Greet life with a heartfelt smile. Find joy in ordinary events — they too partake in the holy drama of existence. Welcome laughter and play but at no one's expense. Grieve when you need to — and cherish your tears. Foster life-enhancing passions. Act on healthy desires. Harness harmful urges and probe for beneficial inclinations they may be mask or warp. Unbridled lust may hide a yearning for intimate love, excessive aggression may cover a vulnerable gentleness, unbound ambition may distort a laudable desire to contribute to life.

### **Betrothe Yourself to Truth**

Enlarge and refine your lenses of consciousness. Welcome all forms of inquiry and knowing. Explore the nature of existence as you and others experience it. Pursue knowledge and understanding, cultivate intuition and insight, unleash creative imagination. Challenge assumptions. Interrogate beliefs and values. Question generalizations. Scrutinize the many fictions that masquerade as facts. Assess expectations — they may harbor seeds of suffering. Honor doubt and confusion. Resist the temptation to flee ambiguity and deny uncertainty. Avoid creating false clarities and forging phony convictions.

Be a cosmonaut of consciousness, engaging your whole being in the adventure of knowing. Realize that knowing occurs both below and above awareness and involves both learning and unlearning. We know more — and less — than we think, and our knowledge is as much fabricated as found. Seek wisdom in every domain of life. Wisdom comes through knowing life in a deep, direct, and undistorted way and through appreciating the diverse perspectives of others, contemporary and ancient. The eye of wisdom is telescopic and microscopic, seeing far and near, outward and inward. Genuine humility — surrendering ego to Godliness — clears your being and lets the Eternal see through you.

Expand the spectrum of your conscious awareness. Return to your senses and soar beyond them. Strengthen your attention muscles so you become as present as a cat. Observe what you are actually sensing, feeling, and thinking moment to moment. Inquire into what you really know and value. Acknowledge what is unclear and uncertain. When you are fully present, you bring your whole being to whatever you are experiencing and doing moment to moment. Presence deepens your understanding of events and how they are interrelated — and makes every experience meaningful. Practices that build presence include meditation, mindfulness, yoga, tai chi, focusing, the creative arts, and other centering activities.

Learn from every creature and occurrence. Let owl and elephant be your teachers. Let rose and lotus be your tutors. Let stone mentor you, and winds counsel you. Give ear to the primal wisdom of your body. Every moment teaches a library of lessons. Every being professes the mystery of existence.

Be a gentle lion of integrity. Bravely build self-understanding by exploring the height, width and depth of your being. Identify your gifts. Note other personal qualities that require improvement. Scrutinize your motives and deeds for the odors of ego and fragrances of grace. Investigate your personal history, reflecting on how you have been influenced by family, friends, neighbors, teachers, colleagues, strangers. Consider too how you have been affected by community, culture, religion, nature, history, politics, the marketplace. Conversely, contemplate how you have impacted the persons, creatures and events in your life.

Release the distortions in your self-judgments. Don't cling to ideas and images of who you — or others — think you are. Don't allow assumptions about age, gender, culture, race, or ethnicity limit who you are or can become. Let go of preoccupation with norms, averages, standards, trends: they may offer valuable information but ultimately cannot address your unique gifts and calling. Even models can be oppressive if rigidly imitated. Let ideals be magnets drawing forth your capacities rather than rods that measure and flog you. Your boundless being cannot be contained by social prescriptions or personal definitions. All human qualities are available to all human beings: they are the sundry seeds ever present in the garden of your being. Grow the most wonderful garden you can. Learn from the caterpillar that doesn't cling to its form but rather courageously transforms into the most amazing butterfly it can be.

Cultivate an empathic understanding of other people. Try to experience the world from their unique perspectives. Listen not only to what others say but to the unspoken messages they unconsciously convey through gestures and facial expressions and through moods and movements. Remember that each person's experiences are partly shaped by temperament, gender, family, society, heritage, language. Learn as much as you can about other

classes, cultures, religions. Notice your mind's tendency to create concepts that oversimplify — and deform — what you observe. Observe how your expectations determine what you see and how others respond to you. Let go of stereotypes. See the limits and strengths in every perspective. Realize that ultimately everyone is an enigma, even to themselves.

Grow your understanding of unity and diversity. Notice subtle distinctions and complex connections. Realize that everything, no matter how large or small, partakes in a greater whole. Observe how all beings are simultaneously unique and united members of Reality.

### **Be as Open and Creative as a Child**

Awaken your curiosity in the world. Stay open to yourself, to others, and to all realms of existence and transcendence. Cultivate receptivity. Diversify the palette of people in your life. Explore nature. Welcome sundry perspectives. Observe, research, delve, dream, dialogue. Challenge generally accepted ways. Investigate new opportunities and occasions. Experiment with fresh possibilities. Test intuitions. Let go of self-limiting beliefs. Till outmoded customs and mulch stale habits.

Honor your innate co-creative powers. Be a ready and willing brush in the hand of the Creator. Your life will then help paint an endless series of divine works of art. Realize that creativity is at the heart of personal, social and evolutionary transformation.

### **Return Again and Again to the Wellspring of Your Being**

Set an unwavering commitment to sync with and serve the Source. A daily sacred practice tunes the strings of your soul. It helps you release ego, attune to spirit and commune with the Infinite. Traditional practices include prayer, ritual, meditation, study, charity, and cultivating moral character and holy qualities. Other practices include song, dance, art, natural walks, gardening and almost any action done with holy intention and good will. Much of spiritual work involves dissolving ego-based impediments so sacred service becomes more true, constant and complete. Humble devotion opens the gates to godliness. Your most trustworthy connection to the Source is your embodied spirit.

### **Keep the Essential in the Forefront of Your Mind**

Clarify your values and visions. Align with the core of your being to discern what is most and least important in each day. Create daily intentions attuned to your priorities. Devote time, attention and energy to what you most prize. Don't let the inessential crowd out the essential. When required to do less significant things, do them with presence and care. Let your choices pave the path of your life.

Never give up on realizing your mission and purpose in life and be open to their evolution. Hone your discernment process through meditation, prayer, solitude, silence, study, journaling, and conversations with trusted others. Notice what ignites your enthusiasm and fortifies your positive passions. Explore the silver lining of your fears. Reflect on the lessons gained from suffering and sidetracking. Discover what you treasure from what incites your anger. Muse over childhood joys and reveries. Mine your dreams. Query your spirit. Seek counsel from your body. Interview people you admire. Let insights cook in the cauldron of your soul. The mission and meaning of your life unfold as you courageously attune to Source, engage with existence, share your gifts, and honor the gifts of others.

When making a decision, gather the relevant resources, evaluate the salient information, and ask your whole being for a decision. Wait patiently for a response and discern the messages you receive. They may come in words, images, feelings, urges, sensations, or subtle movements. They may come through persons and creatures you meet. Challenge messages that don't feel authentic, consult with trusted others when necessary, and act mindfully on the choices you make. Realize that what is a good course of action today may not be a worthy approach at a future time or place, so continually ask Spirit for guidance and monitor the consequences of your deeds.

### Ripen and Harvest Your Fruits

Be a good gardener, mustering the diligence to bring your work to fruition. Finish important tasks and projects. Persist in working on valued causes even if they can't be completed in your lifetime. Galvanize your resolve with the discipline that flows naturally from syncing with the Source. As you persevere, be open to changing circumstances, to new priorities and to flexibly accommodating them. Be willing to curtail projects that become less significant or no longer feasible. Seek support, resources and guidance as needed. Engage in collaborations with diverse yet supportive others. Foster group synergies to optimize innovative thought and ensure effective action. Maintain a rhythm of activity and rest, work and play. Refrain from straining and forcing. Avoid belaboring and overthinking. Test and honor your limits. Let go of perfectionism. By respecting your current capacities, you will live a happier, longer, and more productive life.

Trust that your sustained presence will take care of the fruits. Work in a relaxed yet alert way, knowing that insights are gifts bestowed when you let go and align. Meet challenges with possibilities. Realize that in most cases, less is more, and quality trumps quantity. Decide whether inner criteria or outer requirements will determine when the work is finished. Celebrate your accomplishments, acknowledging they ultimately derive from the Wellspring. Bless your life and the Giver of life.

*Charles Burack is an award-winning poet, writer, teacher, and scholar. He is also a spiritual counselor and creativity coach who is active in interfaith education. A professor at John F. Kennedy University, he is author of Leaves of Light, Songs to My Beloved, and D.H. Lawrence's Language of Sacred Experience.*



## One Response to “On Turning Sixty: Counsel From My Inner Wisdom on How to Live”

**says:** Sharon [October 16, 2016 at 7:59 am](#)

This is an amazing desideratum—wisdom perfectly suited to our time. I want to thank Mr. Burack for taking the time to distill and shape his considerable insight, and for his generosity in offering it here. Think of this: he turns 60, and we get the gift!

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