

Letter from a friend: Bill Farrelly

Dear Bill, If I could give you a gift, it would be this: Be gentle with yourself and even more gentle with others. Do not be afraid to fear but do not fear needlessly. Take risks but do not be foolhardy.

Try new things, accept new challenges, never fear failure – you only fail when you refuse to have a go. Avoid being unnecessarily critical, do not gossip, never spread a rumour.

Learn how to defend yourself – it will do wonders for your self-confidence.

Be kind, especially when you don't want to be. Be patient, especially when you feel you should not have to be. Be vulnerable but not reckless.

Share your talents with others; never be a hoarder. Never take credit when it is not yours to take. When it is, be gracious, not boastful.

Revel in nature. Absorb it, marvel at the delicacy and beauty of flowers, be in awe of the ocean, the majesty of the stars, the power of the wind, the terror of fire and floods.

Take delight in kittens or pups at play, be confounded by the elephant's fear of the mouse, laugh at the mishmash body of the platypus.

Watch little children at play; try to appreciate their innocence.

Don't be a grouch, never sulk, avoid self-pity. Laugh with others, not at them. Be grateful for what you have. Avoid envy and resentment; they are poisonous.

Try to not seek the approval of others.

Keep an open mind: never be afraid to admit you are wrong. When you disagree, do so respectfully. Do not let opposing views spoil a long friendship but always have the courage of your convictions.

Beware of pride. It can lead to arrogance.

Apply yourself diligently but do not take yourself too seriously. Accept that you will embarrass yourself – it simply proves you are human. Laugh at yourself.

Never ignore another's suffering. Help if you are able, pray if you are not. Ignore those who scoff at prayer; better still, pray for them as well.

Pay homage to God by respecting your fellows. You do not have to like them – you may even despise them – but always be aware the same God created both of you. Smile at strangers; you will both be blest.

Listen to good music, sing your heart out and read, read, read.

And always look for the opportunity to laugh.

Yours affectionately,

A friend.