



*STRONGER AND MORE PEACEFUL HEARTS*

# NOURISH *ALL* CREATION



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Our world aches for consistent strength over the challenges we face. This type of strength must be filled with high levels of values and morals so that all can benefit, including our 4 legged friends. In fact, it will be our 4 legged friends who will take center stage in this book to guide us through my “sweet 16” characteristics of a person with a strong heart in 2023 and beyond.

We spend much of our life either eating or searching for the most delicious food that makes us happy. As a vegan, I only promote cruelty free foods, and there are many options available today. However, regardless of our choice of food, the best option is always to select something that is nutritious for our bodies. This is a challenge for many, nevertheless, I must include the fact that a vegan diet is healthiest for our bodies.

As we feed our bodies, we also feed our emotions every day. The same dynamic applies for our emotions as we search for many options that seem to “taste best”. However, those options are not always what is best for our emotional health.

We are going to bring these two most important searches for nourishment together. We will select the best emotional options which I will call my “sweet 16”, and our animal friends will lead the way to exploring them.

As we are inspired by our 4 legged partners we share the planet with, my hope is it will lead you to make healthier and morally better food options.

The truth is we need the animals and they need us. And the planet needs all of us to come together once and for all to create a nicer world for animals and people.

**WHY WE NEED IT NOW MORE THAN EVER**

The recent coronavirus showed us how fragile we really can be, and how dependent on one another we are for survival. When we suffer, the planet suffers. And when both people and the planet suffer, animals suffer even more. That was clear in what was occurring in the factory farms during this latest pandemic. There is no such thing as “humane slaughter”. Factory farms are a horrible environment for animals as well as those who work there. And with all the pharmaceutical products being developed during this pandemic, almost surely testing was done on animals in medical labs, which I believe are unnecessary and inconclusive.

## **WHAT ARE LIFES’ MOST IMPORTANT LESSONS**

The most valuable lessons reveal themselves in challenging times. However, they are not usually clearly seen. In order to see these rich lessons, we must have consistent vision, respect for all creation and an open mind and heart.

## **HOW DOES THIS JOURNEY BEGIN?**

I asked my buddy, Daniel The Beagle to poll his friends on social media for the most important characteristics a person can have to live a peaceful and prosperous life.

The top 16, or “sweet 16” as I have now called them are in this book.

I did some of my own research, and called on examples of animals I knew personally and animals that I was familiar with to lead us through each one. Then I added some thought provoking questions so you can apply them to your own life.

What are our goals? That each person walks away with some ideas to create a positive and consistent way of life, and as a result, our animal friends also benefit with more love and respect.

Shall we begin?

### *1. Hope (Daniel)*

Hope is the expectation of positive things, especially in darker times. We all hold out for hope in situations where all seems lost. One thing we can be assured of is that dark times will always follow us, sometimes darker than others. The latest dark time with the coronavirus had multiple people seeking hope for

various reasons. One was to hope that the virus would go away. Another was to hope that we would get back to normal. And I'm sure people hoped for many other things that emanated from this virus. Clearly a good sense of hope can overcome fear and doubt. Enter Daniel the Beagle.

Daniel was bred to be a "hunting dog". However, he was found wandering in a cemetery less than a year old, clearly, failing as a hunter. After spending 3 days at the shelter and no one claimed him, Daniel was put into a gas chamber along with 17 other dogs to be euthanized. 30 minutes of toxic gas went through that chamber to destroy these dogs. When the door opened, miraculously Daniel was the only one standing as strong as he could, wagging his tail. He became an international hero, traveling the country to promote adoptions and banning the gas chambers in other states. Most impressive was the numerous letters and emails that I received about Daniel. Here are a few quotes, "I had been divorced and had thought I hit rock bottom in my emotional life, but when I heard Daniel's story, I was filled with hope. Since that time, I have done so much better." "I had cancer and was going through treatments and I was

about to give up but when I heard Daniel's story, I was filled with strength and hope. Not only did I get better, my life became so much more fulfilling." "Honestly, I am not that much of an animal person, however, I found myself to be a very judgmental and critical person, but for some reason Daniel's story motivated me to change my ways and today I am happier and a more peaceful person."

How can we acquire higher levels of hope during our life? As Daniel did, we can stand as strong as possible during the difficult times. Also, as he did, we can work on having a positive attitude every day. Finally, we can spend more time researching stories like his to provide us with the role model attitude we need.





Food for Thought:

For Us:

- Is Daniel someone you can use as a role model for hope? If so, great, but still take the time to research another 4-legged hope role model.
- Spend time each morning reflecting on your role model's life and how it can help you with something you are handling today.

For Our Dog Friends and the World:

- Daniel survived the gas chamber which was a miracle. Afterwards I helped many people in their attempt to ban the use of the gas chamber in their states.

- Choose something that is done to animals that is not humane. For instance, there are organizations dedicated to rescuing Beagles from medical research labs. Research it, and offer your support even if it is to write to rescues and thank them for what they are doing.

## 2. *Kindness (Geese)*

I believe we hunger for kindness even more since we see so many unkind actions on social media and the news. Even when I notice vicious attacks on social media over such things as political arguments, my sense is that underneath the anger is a plea for more kindness.

The ripple effects of kindness are quite inspiring. We have all seen actions of kindness and how their impact can become infectious. Of course, the opposite is also true. Therefore, our goal is to increase kindness in the world starting with ourselves.

There were many animals I could have selected to be the choice for kindness. After much reflection, I settled on geese. Yes, the geese we see in our parks. People go out of their way to displace them because they can be such a nuisance, especially on golf courses. Well, if we stopped to look at how they lead their lives, we would see how they can teach this important section on kindness.

Geese fly in a “V” formation. They do this so they reduce air friction for each other. A true act of kindness. Imagine spending most of our day looking at how our actions can take some burden off of others. This “V” formation also provides the ability for all to see what is going on in front of them.

I am reminded of the unfortunate “take care of self” society we live in, especially when it comes to getting ahead in the world. These geese show us that we can increase kindness by giving everyone a chance at seeing greatness, or even just sharing our vision for others to benefit.

Geese honk at each other, especially those in the front of the formation, to offer encouragement as they fly.

True kindness comes in affirming others with genuine and consistent words. How often do we do this for others? How often do we do this in our own self talk? I am a substitute teacher in a middle school and many times I see opportunities missed to affirm our youth with kindness. Additionally, our long-term relationships can also benefit from kind words and affirmations.

These kindnesses can create a ripple effect outward into our acquaintances and strangers in our world.

When a goose gets sick or wounded, two others stay with him/her until they die or are able to fly again. The key here is that two remain so although one could be a mate, the other is proving that the kindness extends further than just the mate.

There is a need for kindness to increase in our world especially towards those different than us. These geese examples can sure lead the way to positive spiritual changes, and increasing levels of kindness.



## Food for Thought:

### For Us:

- These geese have provided an appealing and nourishing inspiration on kindness.
- Select one of the lessons provided by our geese friends and put it into practice in your daily life.
- Write down each evening your observations and feel free to share them with me.

### For Our Geese Friends and the World:

- Share your insights with family and friends. Be sure to explain how the examples of the geese helped you enjoy these fruits of kindness.
- As I explained earlier, there are many people who feel geese are pests in parks and on golf courses. This is one reason why they are continually displaced from where they live. Give them a break, let them have some space. And please encourage others to do the same.
- Geese are also slaughtered for the foie gras industry. This is where metal pipes are inserted down their throats and grain is forced into their stomachs to fatten their livers. Please abstain from this terrible practice by not eating foie gras and

encourage others to do the same. These geese have led all of us to a deeper life of kindness. Let's help them out too.

### 3. *LOVE (COWS)*

There are over 1,000 songs with “love” in the title. Some inspire us to look at how we love others, and some speak of how love can hurt. Love is a beautiful word, but even more so love is a beautiful expression. Many use the word, but act it out with less intent. Love also has a way of losing its’ flavor or passion over time. All of this said, to love with consistent expression and without limits is one of the more delicious spiritual dishes for us to indulge in.

My decision of which animal to use as an example of love was a challenge, similar to choosing an animal for kindness. However, the decision was made for me on a fateful night in December 2018.

In Paterson, New Jersey a cow somehow got herself to the top of a truck headed to a slaughterhouse. She jumped off the truck, onto the pavement and started to run away. There are other animals who have been known to escape certain situations as they know their death is imminent. However, this cow showed a higher level of intent in her actions.



It was learned that Brianna (her rescued name) was close to giving birth. Brianna's actions were based on a deep love for her unborn baby. Cows are known to show extreme love like this beyond this one example. They are known to be loving mothers, as well as, loving to one another in a very sincere way. Thanks to some amazing people at the Skylands Sanctuary in New Jersey, baby Winter was born, and Brianna was given care and love.

Before they are sent to a slaughterhouse, animals receive no love. Upon arrival at this place, they receive even less if that is possible. Oftentimes, humans measure the love they give out by the love they receive. Animals, cows in this case, do not live that way. Brianna was ready to give love to anyone she encountered and today, I understand she gives plenty. This is one thing for us to consider for this journey. It is called unconditional love, and we can learn a lot from Brianna.

There are also her actions for her unborn baby. I always liked the saying "true love is a sacrifice". It truly

is but many will only sacrifice up to a point. Brianna's motherly love had her ready to sacrifice her own life for Winter. I visited Skylands Sanctuary about a year after Winter was born and seeing Brianna and Winter together made me realize this deep bond of love was still very strong.

Although these are just a few qualities of unconditional love, cows are a great place to start.



## Food for Thought:

### For Us:

- Practice putting away the measuring cup when it comes to love. Start with a close loved one, which honestly may be the toughest to accomplish. Speak with this person and share ideas and honest feelings.<sup>[[SEP]]</sup>
- Find areas where you have the ability to sacrifice to demonstrate your love. Volunteering at a charity is a good start. However, try to go beyond this step.
- Work on some ways to be more consistent in offering sincere love to others.

### For Our Cow Friends and the World:

- Consider a dietary change since we now know how these beautiful beings can inspire us. This could be a sacrificial act of love by us!!<sup>[[SEP]]</sup>
- Research meat and dairy industries and also factory farming's effect on the environment.

#### 4. *Respect (Pigs)*

A line from the HBO series “Sopranos”, “Those that want respect, give respect.” Aside from being one of my favorite lines, this is exceptionally accurate. A lack of respect is one of my biggest “pet peeves” today. For example, someone not keeping their word is one of the easiest ways to lower the level of respect. It is so simple. If you say you are going to do something, do it! If you can’t, just be honest! Respect is like a healthy, good-tasting vegetable – try to enjoy it every day!

This and many actions like it crumble our levels of respect, and weaken our spiritual foundation. But the place to begin is in the very important aspect of respecting ourselves. If we do not respect ourselves, we may have a much more challenging time respecting others. For inspiration, let’s turn to one of my favorite animals, the pig.

Contrary to popular belief, pigs are not dirty animals. In fact, they are extremely clean, choosing to relieve themselves as far away as possible from their living

areas. They have a high degree of respect for themselves and most do it living in difficult circumstances to say the least. Pigs on factory farms are contained in small areas, with females in crates, thus they are not allowed to live with the respect they desire to. It is much easier to stay true to yourself in good conditions than it is under adverse situations. Pigs try very hard and succeed to a great extent to respect themselves even in these horrible conditions.

Pigs are also highly social animals. They communicate effectively with each other, and they respect their social circles. They do not lash out at each other on issues such as sports team preferences or politics! Pigs even try very hard to offer respect to those who abuse them.

Pigs are also extremely smart, smarter than dogs, and many say they have the intelligence of a five-year-old human child. They truly give respect to self and others, so they deserve it too!<sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub> However, before we look for more respect for the pigs, let's see how they can help us with some self-respect.

So many of us let the opinions of others effect our self-respect. The guy I look at in the mirror every day is one! I would almost call this issue an epidemic.

We need to let our friends the pigs motivate us. Under terrible circumstances they stay true to self. Many lessons can be learned through the examples of others facing adversity. This is certainly one. Let us also take advantage of their effective and peaceful social structures where there is a high level of mutual respect.



Food for Thought:

For Us:

- Since self-respect is one of the most important areas, I suggest you take a small picture of a pig with you daily. Educate yourself some on their

- plight and use it as inspiration to respect yourself even while others try to force you not to.
- Consider the high level of mutual respect as well as wisdom of the pig in your social interactions. Consider this when the urge comes to lash back at someone for something insignificant.

#### For Our Pig Friends and the World:

- Especially since they hold such a soft spot in my heart, as well as the aforementioned suggestions, please consider sparing some pigs lives when it comes to your dietary selections. You will also be doing a huge favor to your health and the environment.

## 5. *Compassion (Shelby)*

Although I have seen countless people offer compassion, what many people may not know is there is a limit and a condition to it. By limit, I mean a person must decide how much compassion to give and by condition, I mean a person must decide who does and does not receive compassion. Before I continue, I will be honest that I have been guilty of not following either of the above terms. However, make no mistake, compassion is one of the healthiest selections that we could choose.

These limits do not only effect the individual before us, but we are also cutting ourselves short of peace and prosperity.

The most nourishing dish we call compassion only reaches the potential it should when there are no limits or conditions.

I was privileged beyond words to have lived with



someone who defined compassion at its highest level. If she were a chef of compassion, everyone would line up to taste her amazing ways. And the reason they would do this is because they would see the value to themselves as well as the value to others.

This individual was my Shelby, (2008-2019) an abused and abandoned Pit Bull who graced my life, saved my life, and then became an amazing therapy dog.

Shelby had a rough beginning to life, more than likely a bait dog for fighting, she somehow survived and then was left tied to a gas station (Shell station, hence her name) with no food or water. She remained there for three days before being brought to a shelter. Nobody paid any attention to her there until I came along. We started a relationship during a difficult time in my life, and her attentiveness towards me was incredible.

We all have some dark moments from our past. What we do with them is another thing. Shelby made a

choice to use her dark moments to make a bond with those she encountered. She knew how it felt to be alone, scared, and abused, and she made it her life vocation to help others who felt the same.

We all have the same choice to offer compassion to others with the attitude Shelby had. This is our foundation for building a compassionate life, so please consider this step first before moving ahead. I know it is not easy, and this is from experience, so please start out with “baby steps”.

Compassion should not have any limits. When Shelby was on a therapy call, she would give 110% of herself every time. This too can be a challenge as the spiritual practice of compassion can be very draining. Shelby knew this but realized her focused attention was worth it in order to help the person she was there for. When she returned home, a good run in the yard and a nap were in order.

Finally, is the issue of conditional compassion, the thought of deciding who receives compassion

arguably is the most challenging.

Shelby visited every situation you could imagine as a therapy dog. For the best example, I will explain her visits to a juvenile detention facility in New Jersey. This was really a rough place, what you might imagine it to be and then some.

Shelby visited mostly the young men, ages 14-18. One young man was very angry, but always wanted to see Shelby. He found himself in solitary confinement on more than one occasion. The guard always left it up to me whether I wanted to go in there, but only for 5 minutes.

One day will always stick out in my mind. The young man was at his worst. He was in solitary and he was very angry. This day Shelby pulled me towards the door to see him. She decided she was not his judge or his jury. She simply decided he was in need of compassion and she had the ability to give it. She may even have had thought that maybe it would help him turn his life around. Either way, her attitude shined

brightest this day.



Food for Thought:

For Us:

- Invest your time and efforts into the attitudes Shelby carried with her for compassion.
- Use your dark moments in life as a motivation to help others in their own difficult times<sup>[SEP]</sup>.
- Throw away the measuring cup when it comes to compassion. Give without limit.

- Really focus on what you can do, not what others may think you should do when it comes to compassion toward others. To start, smile at that upset person at work, or out in your town. Then build off of that.

For Our Pit Bull Friends and the World:

- Pit Bulls are terribly profiled and thus are killed in shelters more than any other breed. To say that they get a bad rap is an understatement. Shelby was an amazing ambassador for the breed, but there are so many more. Tell their stories to others. Feel free to use Shelby's Story (I can email an ebook copy of my book, 'Shelby's Grace" to you). Be their voice, they need it and we need them.

## 6. *Gratitude (Cats)*

Gratitude is probably the most common spiritual virtue discussed lately. Many people suggest having a gratitude journal, which is a great idea. I recently started one as well. However, it can be difficult to keep coming up with things to be thankful for, which then limits the value of this idea.

If we truly learn to accept certain circumstances and see even limiting situations as a blessing, we will uncover a new vision of gratitude and enjoy life even more.

“Dorothy, I think there are more cats out here.” The words of my beloved grandfather, “the Chief”, to my incredible grandmother about the increase in feral cats outside their back door. My grandmother cared for literally thousands of feral cats during her lifetime, and watching how the cats reacted to her love was amazing.

There was no way for my grandmother to give large

amounts of food to the cats, there simply were too many. I would watch her talk to the cats and explain the situation. Initially the cats would not be happy, especially the new ones to the “family” she had created. But over some time, they would accept the amount of food they received and they also became accepting of having to wait. Once they all reached this level of acceptance, their level of gratitude increased noticeably. I am not sure an equal number of humans would have made such a positive transition!

Our society dictates a “need more, have more attitude” and even still gratitude levels are not where they should be.

There were also several cats in my grandmother’s family who became sick. She would take them inside and care for them. Once again, their level of gratitude was to be admired. Even though they were feral cats, they appreciated the love and care more than anything.

I need to share another story about my grandmother

to put the cherry on top of this. She had polio from when she was an infant. Her mother had Alzheimer's and lived with her. My grandfather, the Chief, was an amazing man but he was 24 years older than she was and was very needy to say the least.

During an ice storm one day, my grandmother went out to shovel the front stoop. She slipped and broke her good leg, a compound fracture. With the "dynamic duo" inside, she laid there for hours until help came.

I visited her in the hospital later that day and she said, "Oh, Joseph, how are you? Can we maybe get you something to eat?" Somehow, my grandmother was able to not only accept her very difficult situation but was gracious and loving for my visit.

The recipe for gratitude is now clear thanks to my grandmother's cats. Appreciate 100 times more the simple things we have in order to open up new levels of gratitude and peace.





Food for Thought:

For Us:

- Find at least two situations this week where you need to accept less than you thought you would receive. Turn your attention to being more grateful. [T T T T]  
[SEP SEP]
- This is an important virtue to document with prayers and observations.

For Our Cats Friends and the World:

- Please always spay and neuter your pets, and “sing this song” to others so they understand the importance of limiting the number of cats that are born. [T T]  
[SEP]
- Be kind to feral animals. They share this planet with us and deserve our compassion and respect.

## 7. Persevere (Elephants)

To continue in the face of adversity is a huge challenge. Many people use adversity as an excuse not to carry on in life, especially real difficult challenges which we all endure.

To persevere is something that can bring immense value to our life and because of ripple effects, also to the lives of so many we interact with. Equally as immense is the animal I have chosen to assist us in this area.

The elephant is a very large and majestic animal. Their deliberate movements exude calmness in all aspects of their life. Elephants are very slow to anger, but when they do get angry their powerful inner strength will show. They also persevere in any environment they live in; whether it be hills or plains, immense amounts of foliage or hardly any. To that end, whenever they leave an area that they lived in, they are sure to leave the space habitable to those who come after them.

This elephant example presents itself as our first idea for becoming better at persevering. Work on being slow to anger. Anger is a dangerous emotion that breaks down our strength during adversity. Start on small issues that could make you angry and picture our elephant friends.

Elephants are also great communicators within their communities, and they are also amazing listeners, picking up and distinguishing sounds with their feet. Oh yes, they have the ability to communicate and listen effectively!!

When challenges hit us, our already compromised communication abilities weaken even more. Sorry, truth is truth. We need to be especially mindful in listening carefully and being observant of all facts when adversity hits and we need to persevere with grace. The elephant does not waiver. They remain effective in all situations.

Unfortunately, elephants are not without their share of adversity in life. Elephants are hunted for their

tusks, and recently revealed, the circus industry tears babies from their families. Additionally, while in captivity, they are treated very poorly by humans. It is important here to observe that all these animals stay true to self and others under extreme adverse circumstances.



Food for Thought:

For Us:

- When anger starts to simmer within us, focus on a picture of the calm and confident elephant.
- In times of adversity, always remember the importance of listening and communicating.
- To effectively persevere through adversity, keep your faithful herd close, as the elephant does.

## For Our Elephant Friends and the World:

- Boycott any animal circus or elephant rides. They have too much to teach us instead of exploiting them.
- Speak out and use the examples of elephants in times when we need to persevere through adversity.

## *8. Forgiveness (Dogs)*

Forgiveness may be the most difficult spiritual virtue to master. After years in ministry to humans, I saw so many people struggle to forgive others. This is understandable as the wounds of hurt can often run deep. That said, the benefits of forgiving from your own heart and soul are worth the efforts.

In 1812 France, a dog was on a rowboat in the middle of a body of water with his “owner”. The owner threw the dog overboard in an effort to drown him. Each time the dog struggled to get back to the boat and climb in, the man forced him back into the water. Finally, out of frustration and probably fatigue, the man also fell off the boat into the water. At that moment, the dog got to the man and helped him get back to the boat. No doubt this was an amazing act of forgiveness.

This dog may be the top all-star of forgiveness, but all dogs shine in this important area. If we examine this dog’s actions, there was no time to think when his

betrayer also fell into the water. For us, when we hurt, there is often too much thinking on our part. And the more we think, the harder it is to forgive.

In my many years of martial arts training, I have learned the art of mushin, or no mind. If ever attacked and we think too much, fear sets in. After years of training, you are taught to immediately calm the mind, and act with less thinking.

Can you see this dog from the boat in France wearing a Black Belt?! Hopefully you can and this image helps you.

Most dogs are very good at forgiving. I have seen so many reach out with such love and forgiveness after they are mistreated. Although tough for me to admit, I used to have quite a temper. After being mistreated in certain circumstances, I would rant and rave in my house. My dogs had no idea it was not directed towards them. They would all be afraid and once I noticed it, I would stop. They would immediately come to me, especially Shelby and Daniel. Their

actions were clear. They forgave me for my outbursts and they wanted to offer me love and healing.

Dogs seem to understand that the value of forgiving extends not only to the one who is guilty of doing something, but also to themselves. This is very true. Often, we believe all we are doing is letting someone off the hook when we forgive them, but in fact we are releasing a burden off ourselves as well. Anger and resentment can wear us down very quickly.



Food for Thought:

For Us<sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>:

- The next time an opportunity arises where you need to forgive someone, stop yourself from thinking too much. Offer some form of forgiveness quickly, even if it is in the quiet of your own heart.<sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>



- Recognize the burden off yourself when you offer forgiveness. Use this newfound energy to take care of yourself and maybe a dog in need.

#### For Our Dog Friends and the World:

- Although I do love all animals, I love dogs the most. There are so many in need around the world. Please “adopt, don’t shop” and encourage others to do the same.
- Always speak out on their behalf and make people aware of what loving and forgiving souls they are.

## 9. Self-Control (Monkeys)

Self-control, otherwise known as not giving into temptations, is a very important spiritual virtue. Although I do not believe it is realistic for anyone to be perfect in this area, becoming better each day is an admirable goal. Lack of self-control often leads to a decrease in self-esteem, so there is a cause and effect situation happening. In addition, when we lack self-control, there is almost always an impact on others. One way to practice self-control is to stop yourself from impacting others.

Enter our closest species relative for help, monkeys and other primates. Macaque monkeys have had to endure one of many experiments that were very traumatizing, nonetheless the result is eye-opening.

The monkeys were only fed when they pulled a string that delivered a painful electric shock to another unrelated monkey in a nearby cage. The monkeys could see each other.

87% of the monkeys ended up going hungry!! Under the same circumstances, I am not sure humans would score as high.

When there is a self-serving temptation of any kind, it is a likely scenario someone else will pay a price. At times, we see only the prize before us and not the ripple effects.

Gorillas are, like all animals, not happy to be in zoos. It is a very restrictive life for animals who love their freedom and the natural habitat they live in.

Several times there have been reports where a child has fallen into the gorilla's area and the gorilla has protected the child. This usually happens in a stressful environment, but the gorilla remains calm. The tendency to lose self-control often happens in a difficult or stressed filled situation. Drinking too much or drug use are common temptations and have the ability to assist in a dangerous situation. These gorillas were in a very difficult situation, but did not lash out and kept their self-control at a level where

they were able to help someone in need.

Self-control is like many of the other spiritual virtues we have talked about, they take some practice and a vision to see the positives for us as well as others.



Food for Thought:

For Us: <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>

- Think back to when a situation where you did not exercise good self-control. What were the impacts on you and others. Use this as your inspiration for future situations.
- When you have challenges in your life and temptations arise, develop a “go to” image to bring you back to a solid foundation of self-control.

## For Our Primate Friends and the World: SEP

- Animal testing is an area to become more educated as it applies to animal abuse. Most animal tests are not necessary. Consider using products that are not tested on animals. SEP
- Zoos are not happy places for animals. There are animal sanctuaries for old or sick animals that provide a viable option. Please support them.

## ***10. ATTITUDE (DANIEL)***

If we are to continue nourishing our bodies and minds, we will need a good foundation. This foundation is compared to drinking plenty of water, the life-giving liquid. Our foundation here is a positive attitude, which is an often talked about subject by many people. It is important to be very consistent in building a positive attitude.

On October 3, 2011, 18 dogs were placed in a gas chamber in Florence, Alabama. After 30 minutes of toxic gas filling the chamber, 17 had unfortunately passed away. One dog was destined to be a miracle. He was a doe-eyed Beagle mix and was named Daniel, after the biblical Daniel in the lion's den.

For several years, Daniel traveled the country with me, his Dad, to promote adoptions and support efforts to ban the gas chamber. Daniel has been part of my family for 9 years and he is a wonderful dog. What is clear about Daniel is his incredible upbeat attitude about life. Most dogs are very happy, but Daniel takes

a positive attitude to a new level. Having watched him in many different scenarios, I can attest to this gift Daniel has, and what he can share with the world.

There are several possibilities to explain Daniel's positive attitude. <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>\*He knows how close he was to losing his life and he decided that every day truly is a gift. \*He makes a conscious effort every day and works at it. <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>\*God instilled this positive attitude into him to inspire us.

I believe that any or all of these three are true. Most important is for all of us to believe it and recognize that we can all relate to them. We may not have faced a gas chamber, but we can all understand the fragility of life and how fortunate we are to be alive. We can all work at something, especially when we know the value. God loves us all, so we have the creator's influence in all of our hearts.

To foster this positive attitude will result in really enjoying the spiritual lessons before us each day and will go a long way in helping all creation in this world

we share.



Food for Thought:

For Us:<sup>L</sup><sub>SEP</sub>

- Determine three ways you are going to implement a positive attitude each morning to ensure you will bring it into the world.

For Our Friend, Daniel and the World:<sup>L</sup><sub>SEP</sub>

- Tell Daniel's story far and wide that miracles do happen, and the results can change the world for the better.<sup>L</sup><sub>SEP</sub>
- Speak of the sanctity of all life and respect for all creation.



## 11. Egoless (Donkey)

It may be impossible to be completely egoless, but it is something to at least strive towards. I compare it to being perfect in Martial Arts. The best mindset is to keep improving towards a goal of being better today than you were yesterday.

Our ego does get us into trouble at times. It can easily start arguments and stress relationships with loved ones as well as placing us in a position where we are not satisfied with life's gifts. Enter my friends, the donkeys!

Christians may know that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. Donkeys in the Bible symbolized humility and peace. So, our friends led the way a long time ago as an animal whose life was about moving towards being egoless. Oftentimes, we "ride into" a situation a lot more brazen, showing what we know, or strongly stating our point of view. A donkey can bring us to a better place as we approach situations in our life where our ego may flare up.

Donkeys never get involved in any activity they feel is unsafe. Humans take risks which is fine, but some risks are taken because our ego calls and many of them can lead to regret. Consider the wisdom and even keel demeanor of a donkey the next time temptation hits for something we know is a risk that should be avoided.

Just like monkeys, donkeys in a herd will groom each other and keep themselves clean. Humans are very competitive. I saw my share of this in the business world. Jealousy runs high and looking out for another in your “herd” or business environment is a rare occurrence.

We should take a page out of the donkey’s book, and spend more time helping each other grow and look good, then our egoless journey will improve.



## Food for Thought:

### For Us:

- When conflict arises, consider your approach to the other person. Be more like the donkey who has a goal of peace and humility in these situations.
- Watch your ego in instances where a risk seems appealing but, is in fact, something you know deep down you should not do.
- Make adding value to your coworkers and friends a priority.

### For Our Friends, the Donkeys:

- Do not use a donkey as a symbol for anything negative (ex: ass)
- Donkeys are overworked and exploited around the world. Please learn more about this and consider contributing to those organizations who help and save them.

## *12. Harmony (Chickens)*

Chickens can absolutely inspire us to live in harmony!

As families and communities, we tend to run in many different directions, with just a drop in the amount of time spent sharing a meal or just talking. This is clearly not a harmonious life, and it is starting to cost us in many ways.

Chickens live in flocks and they highly synchronize their daily movements with one another, which leads to time spent in the community. You could say they plan better, and they prioritize time in the community as being important.

We could learn from this remarkable behavior and work at spending time as a family and community.

Chickens also show the ability to learn socially and to benefit from the correct and incorrect responses of others. They are open to learning from one another and they grow from their experiences.

Humans sometimes resist learning from each other, especially in times when the person may “look bad”. This does not foster a harmonious atmosphere, but instead, one of contention. Chickens can show us an open mind and heart to inspire one another and add value to one another consistently.

You may be familiar with the term “pecking order”. It comes from our chicken friends. They do actually peck at one another during times when it is necessary to stress a point to keep a harmonious community in place. This is not a bad thing. Chickens do this only when necessary and the result leads to a quick turnaround in attitudes among the flock. Everyone comes back in line and things are peaceful once again.

Humans have the habit of not addressing conflict right away. We can easily get quiet and then things begin to fester when we do not air out the issue. Conflicts are a way of life, but they do not have to disturb a harmonious relationship or community.

I am not saying to peck at each other! Instead, discuss the conflict as soon as possible, stick to the point, and

move on. Maybe next time, think of a chicken before reacting!



Food for Thought:

For Us:

- Make a conscious effort to prioritize your time on a weekly basis with family and friends.
- Be more open to learning from each other. Start with someone you are close with and be honest with your feelings.
- Work on the three-step process with conflicts, speak as soon as possible, be honest and stick to the issue, and move on.

## For Our Chicken Friends and the World:

- 136 million chickens are killed every day in the world, mostly for food. Please make an attempt to eat less chicken each week, and maybe work towards being vegan.
- Use the chicken as an illustration for ourselves and to our youth on how to live a more harmonious life.

### ***13. Inner Peace (Whales)***

I remember being on a boat when I was young and we spotted a whale close by. Initially there was a feeling of fear, but I clearly recall it changing to a feeling of peace.

In the movie, “Cast Away”, Tom Hanks’ character sees a whale as he is finally escaping the island on a raft. He too is initially startled, but he quickly calms down as he sees the whale up close.

Those who possess inner peace as an individual have this way of transferring it to others, and it is clear whales can do this.

Whales are obviously very large, and at times because of their size, a little imposing. As my two stories illustrate, they somehow get past this intimidation and they move to being a comforter. They are in fact beautiful to see and observe as they swim in the oceans of the world.

Whales nurture friendships, they have the ability to grieve, play and most impressively, they cooperate with



one another. All of these qualities, consistently done, lead us to a life of inner peace.

Even Killer Whales, contrary to their name, are peaceful and sensitive beings.

Like many animals, whales are misunderstood. However, an individual with a solid foundation of inner peace has no worries about what others think. They are large in size, larger in heart, and have the largest dose of inner peace.

Food for Thought:

For Us:

- Determine two ways a whale can help you develop a better sense of inner peace.
- How can your level of cooperation with others help you be more peaceful?

## For Our Whale Friends and the World:

- Whales are hunted and slaughtered around the world. Speak out against this terrible act and support the groups who try to stop them from being harmed.
- Aquariums are horrible environments for whales in captivity. Please don't support them.



## *14. Humility (Sheep)*

When we say we are humble, it can be interpreted as a sign of weakness. Saying that we are surrendering ourselves to another, even more so can point to weakness. However, these are perspectives from someone truly not understanding humility and surrender.

We may want to be in total control in all aspects of our life, but that is not reality, nor is it a peaceful solution. Humility comes from first understanding that we need to give up control, that is a positive and strong thing to do.

Hope for humility comes from beautiful creatures known as sheep.

Sheep are obedient and follow their shepherd, but at the same time they form social bonds with each other. What they do is create a balance on dependency and leading their own life, making some decisions as a flock and also as individuals. They are smart enough to remain in the

flock when danger arises, and certainly look for their shepherd as well during these times.

For us this balance is also necessary and once obtained, a peaceful outcome awaits. We would not want to lead our life in total surrender to others, but trying to be in total control and needing no one is not healthy either.

When you do make a choice to “surrender” whether it be to God, a situation or a trusted person, realize this is an act of strength.

Food for Thought:

For Us:

- Consider the situations where you have tried to exercise too much control. Meditate on our sheep friends to back down and find peace in surrendering.
- Talk with someone you trust about the concept of humility and have them be honest with you about places where you can grow.

## For Our Sheep Friends and the World:

- Sheep are terribly mistreated for their “wool” and for food. Please consider alternative clothing and food choices to help these beautiful souls. I have a very nice “vegan” vest that keeps me warm in the winter and while I’m wearing it, I know an animal did not have to suffer to make it.



## 15. *Simplicity (Sloths)*

I thought I lived a simple life until I decided to clean my office and get rid of things I did not need or use anymore.

I thought I lived a simple life until I reflected back on my 29 years in business, looked at my calendars, and saw the schedule I kept both for business and personal life.

If we are honest with ourselves, we realize that we can always work on leading a simpler life, and the payoffs are very nice.

Enter the sloths.

Sloths actually only move when absolutely necessary, and when they do, they move at a very slow pace. There is no such thing as telling a sloth to hurry up. Along with this comes a very simple life mindset, as they hang from trees, and even mate while doing so!

There are times when an extreme example gives us the motivation we need. The sloth is that extreme example. I am not suggesting we start to act as a sloth does, but seeing how they lead such a simple, deliberate life can help us look at our own situation more closely.

Simplicity is a gift and a direct link to more peace and productivity. When I did clean my office, the feeling was awesome. It can give you a feeling of relief and a sense of simplicity which can recharge your life.

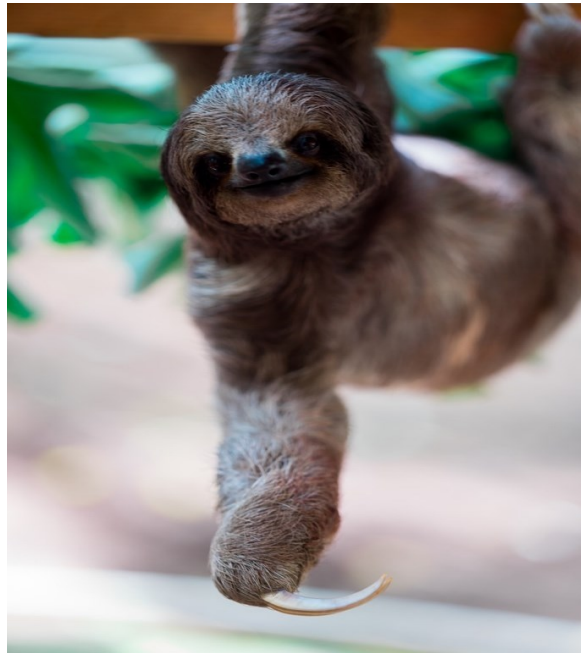
Food for Thought:

For Us:

- Take a look at your daily habits starting with morning activities and see where you can simplify your life. Notice the positive changes.
- While cleaning your house, see what can be donated to those in need, including animal shelters.

## For Our Sloth Friends and the World:

- Spend some time learning more about sloths.
- Since they live in our forests, consider efforts to preserve our forest lands by looking into more vegan lifestyle choices.





## *16. Responsibility (Shelby)*

The last characteristic in our sweet 16 is responsibility. You may say I saved the best for last, but instead I will say it is the most important. To lead a responsible and accountable life is something that will describe us long after we have left this world. It is also the best characteristic to feed our mind, body and soul every day.

John Maxwell says, “Success is found in your daily habits”, which is very true. A daily mix of your daily habits with a concentration on being responsible for your actions leads to a rich and rewarding life.

Too often, we look to what has happened to us, or what has been done to us as an excuse for our life not yielding what we would like it to. When this happens, it is in direct opposition to leading a responsible life.

It is not what happens to us, but how we react to it, and how we integrate adversity into our life that matters.

Shelby had every opportunity to build excuses for her life based on the many adversities she faced.

Almost certainly after being a bait dog for fighting and then being abandoned after that horrible experience, Shelby could have been bitter and nasty. She was everything but that, as she led her life as a therapy dog.

When she needed surgery on both back legs, she not only didn't complain, she showed her appreciation for the care we gave her, and she continued on to train to be a therapy dog with excitement and gratitude.

We humans seem to take these types of adversity and back away from a responsible life, when, in fact, the opportunity is before us to let it drive us to a higher purpose.

Another adversity that Shelby faced was how badly she was profiled her entire life. I used to say there was nobody bullied more than her. She stood tall and as with everything else, she let it drive her to be a more compassionate individual every day of her life.

She shows all of us how to lead a responsible life, adding value to others, while letting adversity fuel our efforts.

Food for Thought:

For Us:

- Consider two events in your life where adversity hit you hard and you waivered off of your responsible life. Then, consider what Shelby has inspired us to do and make the necessary changes to add value to yourself and others.
- Motivate the youth you know to take the path Shelby did in her life and help them to be a more responsible individual.

For Shelby, Pit Bulls, and the World:

- Do not profile anyone, animal or human, and pride yourself on being truly open to respect everyone.
- Adopt, don't shop and consider a Pit Bull breed. There are so many in shelters and rescues ready to become a loving and devoted part of your family.



## CONCLUSION

In the Lion King movie, the circle of life refers to how life events repeat themselves and therefore, a circle is formed. This way of life creates a bonded circle with our animal friends where respect and love is repeated as we assist each other throughout our lives.

This book has shown a sampling of ways that animals help by feeding us emotional “nutrients”. Our return to them should be a look at our diet, how animals are treated in many situations around the world, and a consistent level of respect for all creation.

The following allegory is another way to portray this circle of life. However, in my illustration it is people and animals sitting around the table.

*One day a man said to God, “God, I would like to know what Heaven and Hell are like.” God showed the man two doors. Inside the first one, in the middle of the room, was a large round table with a large pot of vegetable stew. It smelled delicious and made the man’s mouth water, but the people*

*sitting around the table were thin and sickly. They appeared to be famished. They were holding spoons with very long handles and each found it possible to reach into the pot of stew and take a spoonful, but because the handle was longer than their arms, they could not get the spoons back into their mouths.*

*The man shuddered at the sight of their misery and suffering. God said, "You have seen Hell." Behind the second door, the room appeared exactly the same. There was the large round table with the large pot of wonderful vegetable stew that made the man's mouth water. The people had the same long-handled spoons, but they were well nourished and plump, laughing and talking. The man said, "I don't understand." God smiled. It is simple, he said, Love only requires one skill. These people learned early on to share and feed one another. While the greedy only think of themselves... [Author unknown]*

Our world is also starving and I am afraid with too many people living in “hell” it will continue to do so. Factory farming is killing our planet. The reality is that all we have to do is work towards a vegan diet which will lead all of us, animals included, to the “heaven” analogy in the story above.

The opportunity before us is clear. Our physical and emotional health can be vastly improved by following the “sweet 16” characteristics I listed in this book, and consistently living the thought provoking suggestions. And the most beautiful part of all is that our animal friends, who we share this planet, with will also flourish.

This way of life is leading us all to a nicer world for animals and people. Thank you for being part of this life-giving journey.