

NOTES FROM: *Excellent Advice for Living*, by Kevin Kelly

SUMMARY: Just because you're old doesn't mean that you automatically have much valuable wisdom to share. Some people haven't really lived 10,000 days, they've just lived the same day *10,000 times*. Kevin Kelly, however, is an exception, and it turns out that the brilliant and insightful tech innovator gives *excellent* life advice.

For anyone hearing about Kelly for the first time, he is the co-founder of Wired magazine and a highly-praised futurist and author whose optimistic outlook on the next chapter of human history has inspired a generation to think bigger and to advance confidently into the next stage of human evolution.

As Kelly says in the quote that began this summary, the life advice presented in this book was originally intended for his young adult children to help them navigate the hazardous future we all find ourselves hurtling towards. But the very act of writing them down caused him to realize that he had *much* more to offer than he thought he did when he began, which resulted in him eventually compiling this *wonderful* collection of 450 wise, practical, and incredibly valuable aphorisms.

The range of subjects they cover is as wide and deep as life itself, and so you'll find here advice about setting ambitious goals, cultivating peace of mind and equanimity, dealing with loss, organizing your life around adventure and spontaneity, dispelling anger and sadness, minimizing regret, and so much more.

Now, in a book with *hundreds* and *hundreds* of wise, practical aphorisms, my choices about which ones to expand on and which ones to ignore likely say more about *me* than they do about whether they're the "best" aphorisms or the "most useful" ones.

As you read the book and filter this life advice through *your* particular worldview, situation, and understanding, you're probably going to disagree with at least a few of them, or find them irrelevant or silly, etc. But which ones those *are* will change depending on who *you* are. That's part of what makes books so magical!

That being said, if it's true that your quality of life is roughly equal to the quality of the 20-30 people who give you the best advice, then you'd be wise to include Kevin Kelly in that group.

"On my sixty-eighth birthday, I decided to give my young adult children some advice. I am not a frequent advice giver but soon I was able to write down 68 bits. To my surprise, I had more to say than I thought. So for the next several years I wrote down a batch of advice on my birthday, and shared it with my family and friends. They wanted more. I kept going until I had about 450 bits of advice I wished I'd known when I was younger. I am primarily channeling the wisdom of the ages. I am offering advice I have heard from others, or timeless knowledge repeated from the past, or a modern aphorism that matched my own experience.

I doubted any of it is truly original, although I have tried to put everything in my own words. I think of these bits as seeds because each one of them could easily be expanded into a long essay. Indeed, I have spent most of my time writing by compressing these substantial lessons into as compact and tweetable forms as possible. You are encouraged to expand these seeds as you read to fill your own situation. If you find these proverbs align with your experience, share them with someone younger than yourself."

"Being enthusiastic is worth 25 IQ points."

"Listening well is a superpower. While listening to someone you love, keep asking them 'Is there more?' until there is no more."

"Don't be afraid to ask a question that may sound stupid, because 99% of the time everyone is thinking of the same question and is too embarrassed to ask it."

"A major part of travel is to leave stuff behind. The more you leave behind, the further you will advance."

"You don't have to attend every argument you're invited to."

"Pain is inevitable. Suffering is optional."

"If you are looking for something in your house and you finally find it, when you're done with it, don't put it back where you found it. Put it back where you first looked for it."

"The advantage of a ridiculously ambitious goal is that it sets the bar very high, so even if your effort falls short, it may exceed an ordinary success."

"When you give away 10% of your income, you lose 10% of your purchasing power, which is minor compared to the 110% increase in happiness you will gain."

"The best way to learn anything is to try to teach what you know."

"Whenever you have a choice between being right and being kind, be kind. No exceptions."

"We lack rites of passage. Create a memorable family ceremony when your child reaches legal adulthood between eighteen and twenty-one. This moment will become a significant touchstone in their life."

"Recipe for greatness: Become just a teeny bit better than you were last year. Repeat every year."

"Whenever you can't decide which path to take, pick the one that produces change."

"Don't be the best. Be the only."

"Everyone is shy. Other people are waiting for you to introduce yourself to them; they are waiting for you to send them an email; they are waiting for you to ask them on a date. Go ahead."

"The more you are interested in others the more interesting they'll find you. To be interesting, be interested."

"When you are young, spend at least 6 months to 1 year living as cheaply as you can, owning as little as you possibly can, eating beans and rice in a tiny room or tent. That way, any time you have to risk something in the future, you won't be afraid of the 'worst-case' scenario."

"Tend to the small things. More people are defeated by blisters than by mountains."

"Shorten your to-do list by asking yourself 'What is the worst that will happen if this does not get done?' Eliminate all but the disasters."

"To move through a place you may not be permitted, act like you belong there."

"Forgiveness is accepting the apology you will never get."

"You need teachers, parents, customers, fans, and friends because they will see who you are becoming before you will."

"Anything real begins with the fiction of what could be. Imagination is therefore the most potent force in the universe. And you can get better at it. It's the one skill in life that benefits from ignoring what everyone else knows."

"You really don't want to be famous. Read the biography of any famous person."

"When you get invited to do something in the future, ask yourself: Would I do this tomorrow? Not too many promises will pass that immediacy filter."

"When you lend something, pretend that you are gifting. If it is returned, you'll be surprised and happy."

"Over the long term, the future is decided by optimists. To be an optimist, you don't have to ignore the multitude of problems we create; you just have to imagine how much our ability to solve problems improves."

"You don't need more time, because you already have all the time that you will ever get; you need more focus."

"When a child asks an endless string of 'Why?' questions, the smartest reply is 'I don't know, what do you think?'"

"When someone tells you something is wrong, they're usually right. When they tell you how to fix it, they're usually wrong."

"If you can't tell what you desperately need, it's probably sleep."

"This is the best time ever to make something. None of the greatest, coolest creations 20 years from now have been invented yet. You are not late."

"Be a good ancestor. Do something a future generation will thank you for. A simple thing is to plant a tree."

"To be remarkable, read books."

"To succeed, get other people to pay you; to become wealthy, help other people to succeed."

"To manage yourself, use your head. To manage others, use your heart."

"Whenever there is an argument between two sides, find the third side."

"When you lead, your real job is to create more leaders, not more followers."

"It is the duty of a teacher to get everything out of a student, and the duty of a student to get everything out of a teacher."

"When you feel like quitting, just do five more: 5 more minutes, 5 more pages, 5 more steps. Then repeat. Sometimes, you can break through and keep going, but even if you can't, you ended five ahead. Tell yourself that you will quit tomorrow, but not today."

"What you do on your bad days matters more than what you do on your good days."

"To be rich, you don't need to make more money; you chiefly need to better manage the money already flowing through your hands."

"When speaking to an audience, pause frequently. Pause before you say something in a new way, pause after you have said something you believe is important, and pause as a relief to let listeners absorb details."

"Don't wait for the storm to pass; dance in the rain."

"It is your destiny to work on things that only you can do."

"To keep young kids behaving well on a car road trip, have a bag of their favorite unwrapped candy and throw a piece out the window each time they misbehave."

"You cannot get smart people to work extremely hard just for money."

"Constantly search for overlapping areas of agreement and dwell there. Disagreements will appear to be edge cases."

"You will be judged on how well you treat those who can do nothing for you."

"We tend to overestimate what we can do in a day, and underestimate what we can achieve in a decade. Miraculous things can be accomplished if you give it 10 years. A long game will compound small gains that will be able to overcome even big mistakes."

"Your best job will be one that you were unqualified for because it stretches you. In fact, only apply to jobs you are unqualified for."

"Take the stairs."

"What you actually pay for something can be twice the listed price because the energy, time, and money needed to set it up, learn, maintain, repair it, and then dispose of it when done all have their own cost. Not all prices appear on labels."

"For the best results with your children, spend only half the money you think you should, but double the time with them."

"Art is whatever you can get away with."

"When you are stuck, explain your problem to others. Often, simply laying out a problem will present a solution. Make 'explaining the problem' part of your troubleshooting process."

"Don't compare your inside to someone else's outside."

"Occasionally, your first idea is best, but usually it's the fifth idea. You need to get all the obvious ideas out of the way. Try to surprise yourself."

"Our descendants will achieve things that amaze us, yet a portion of what they will create could have been made with today's materials and tools if we had had the imagination. Think bigger."

"If you repeated what you did today 365 more times, will you be where you want to be next year?"

"Pay attention to what you pay attention to."

"Reading to your children regularly is the best school they will ever get."

"To be interesting, just tell your own story with uncommon honesty."

"Unhappiness comes from wanting what others have. Happiness comes from wanting what you already have."

"To get your message across, follow this formula used by ad writers everywhere: simplify, simplify, simplify, then exaggerate."

"Pay attention to who you are around when you feel your best. Be with them more often."

"If we all threw our troubles into a big pile, and we saw everyone else's problems, we would immediately grab ours back."

"When you find something you really enjoy, do it slowly."

"It's stupid stubbornness and reckless foolishness if the goal does not matter, and relentless perseverance and courage if it does."

"The end is almost always the beginning of something better."

"If nobody else does what you do, you won't need a resume."

"Read the books that your favorite authors once read."

"The easy choice pays off right away. The best choice will pay off at the end."

"Your opinion on a contentious issue gains power when you can argue the opposite side as well as they can."

"When you keep people waiting, they begin to think of all your flaws."

"Embrace pronia, which is the opposite of paranoia. Choose to believe that the entire universe is conspiring behind your back to make you a success."

"Go with the option that opens up yet more options."

"Aim to die broke. Give to your beneficiaries before you die; it's more fun and useful to them. Spend it all. Your last check should go to the funeral home and it should bounce."

"Invent as many family rituals as you can handle with ease. Anything done on a schedule - large or small, significant or silly - can become a ritual. Repeated consistently, small routines become legendary. Anticipation is key."

"Very few regrets in life are about what you did. Almost all are about what you didn't do."

"Your goal is to be able to say on the day before you die that you have fully become yourself."

"Advice like these are not laws. They are like hats. If one doesn't fit, try another."