

Excerpt from the opening pages of
Leman & Carlson's
**Unlocking The Secrets
of Your Childhood Memories**
Companion workbook
(conceived and ghosted by Barton Green)

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Follow Your Stage Directions

If "all the world is a stage," and we are the actors, then it is important that we not only explore the true nature of our character, we must also pay close attention to the instructions provided for us in the script itself. These helpful stage directions tell you where, when and what your character should do on the platform. In the context of a few well chosen words, you're told what to wear, whether to stand or sit, when to move and even how to re-act in the process. These convenient guides suggest whether you should "laugh," "cry," "fly into a rage," or "gently caress." In effect, these snips of words and phrases are the subtle signposts that help you to navigate your way through a scene and enhance your performance.

In the course of daily life, however, such helpful hints are not so readily evident. Most of the time we end up ad-libbing our way through difficult moments. Ironically, we never seem to realize our need for direction until we are thrust into the middle of an awkward situation. It is in those moments of panic that we usually recognize our deficiency. And in the context of that anxiety we tend to grapple for an answer with one hand, while struggling for self control with the other. In short, we make life up as we go along - and most of the time we have no idea what way that should be.

Nevertheless in life, just like in a artistic script, if you know where to look - the signposts for direction are everywhere. Art is in itself a reflection of life's do's and don'ts. For instance, down through the ages, there have been dramatic plays, books and historical accounts which illustrate, by example, life's lessons. Shakespeare, for one, was a master at holding up a mirror to humanity. Even today his scripts blatantly illustrate the full spectrum human achievement and destruction. There is indeed much we can learn about ourselves from his emotion-filled plots and characters.

Yet the best illustration of life's do's and don'ts did not come from an artistic playwright. Instead they were recognized by a simple fisherman who walked the earth's stage close to two millennia ago. His observant words and phrases have stood the test of time and has helped to improve the performances of countless characters. In fact his own life is an example of how an insignificant player can change their story and earn an honorable mention on history's marquis. The man's name was Simon Peter.

As he approached the closing chapter of his own story, Peter reflected on the eventful scenes of his time in the spotlight. Reminiscing back on his life, just as you are beginning to do with your childhood memories, he evaluated the lessons he had learned along the way. The sum of those experiences he committed to paper. And it is those few well-chosen words - those simple "Stage Directions"- which we are going to examine throughout the course of your memory exploration.

In the context of your quest to improve your on-stage character, Peter's suggestions are indeed helpful hints to follow:

Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful.... But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his (past)... Wherefore rather brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if you do these things, ye shall never fall..." (2 Peter 1:1-10)

These simple "stage directions" tell you what your character should do on the platform of your life. In the context of these well-chosen words are the signposts capable of guiding you through your memories - and the lessons they hold. In these phrases reside the suggestion of certain attributes, which when acquired, will assist you through those awkward moments when it seems as though you have forgotten your lines and you are not sure of which way to turn.

In these instructions, Peter cautions future performers that if they refuse to consider these 'additions' to their character they are, "blind, and cannot see afar off;" for you to truly want to change the course of your life, you must be willing to see the path you have traveled, accept the notion that you have strayed off course, and be obliged to make alterations. If you refuse to examine the life you have led; the scenes you have played, then there is no way that you can see "afar off." It is impossible to successfully alter your future development if you are "blind" to your faulty past.

However, the fact that you have opened this workbook and are voluntarily reading this page obviously proves that you, like Peter, are willing to look back on your life and learn. Therefore, if all the world is a stage and we are the players, it is important that we strive to daily improve our character. The surest way to achieve that goal, is to pay attention to the do's and don'ts that will enhance our performance. And as any good actor will tell you - that is following the stage directions.

With that sense of purpose in mind, let's look at the first of Simon's suggested character "additions." It is an attribute which, by the way, you have already begun to display...

"It lies within ourselves or in our own actions to possess happiness; or by sloth and negligence to fall from happiness into ruin..."

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STAGE DIRECTION #1

DILIGENCE

"...giving all diligence..."

Diligence is not just an action it is an attitude. The task of improving yourself and your relationships with others must begin with the right mental motivation. Your frame of mind must portray a willingness to work untiringly, zealously to fulfill your intended purpose. Diligence provides you with that desire.

Here at the beginning, you must realize that this voyage you've initiated into your memories concerns more than just an ambition to learn about yourself. This inward journey is also about your need to empower others with an understanding of you, too. Such a long-suffering endeavor can only be accomplished with a steady dose of diligence.

This trait of persistency supplies you with the mental motivation necessary to build a relationship from scratch. This attitude of perseverance is the sustaining mortar that bolsters the often tedious process of re-building broken lives and crumbling friendships.

The great thinker, Henry David Thoreau once commented, " If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.." Diligence is the ability to "advance confidently." It is the positive ingredient of every determined soul, for it constantly whispers the unwavering directive, "No matter how long it takes - Keep on, Keepin' on!"

This positive sense of perseverance was once displayed on talk show examining the topic of "aging gracefully," As the studio lights went on, a smiling host took his microphone out into the TV audience and approached an old man sitting on the aisle. Thrusting the microphone into the gentleman's face, the host assumed a well-practiced look of sincerity and asked, "...How about you sir...what do you attribute your long life to?"

Pondering the question, the old fellow wrapped his wrinkled hand around his cane and pulled his weathered body to its feet. As he rose, a broad grin crossed his furrowed face and his bespectacled eyes lit up with the memories of a lengthy lifetime. "Well, in all my 88 years," he confidently turned toward the camera, " I can truthfully say that I've never been down."

A young man sitting across the aisle wrinkled his brow upon hearing the those words. To him, the old man's declaration was disturbing. It wasn't what he expected to hear at all.

After the show, as the small group began to file out of the studio, the young fellow caught up with the slow moving gentleman and asked, "How can you claim what you said, back there? I don't understand?"

I've been doin' all I know to do to keep my family fed and the rent paid, still, despite my best efforts I feel like the world is sitting on my shoulders! Most of the time I feel like giving up! How can you say that you've never been down? I've been "down" seven times - this week!"

Looking up at the young man's puzzled frown, the venerable gentleman grinned just a little, "Son, it's all a matter of perspective," he explained, patting his wrinkled hand against the young man's flustered face, "you see, I'm always up - or gettin' up."

The positive attitude exhibited by that old man is a quality consistent with persistence. A person demonstrating the characteristics of diligence strives to avoid any notion of negativity. They value their aspiration much more than their perspiration. No doubt it was an individual of such endurance that coined the phrase, "No Pain, No Gain."

Diligence is a ninety pound dreamer staring into a mirror, tirelessly pumping iron - fully expecting to one day see Arnold Schwarzenegger staring back. Diligence is a long-distance runner who, though weary, continually puts one foot in front of the other in an effort to reach the finish line first. Diligence is an attitude of action instilling one's character with the daring incentive to try and the courageous strength to stick with it.

If it wasn't for the attribute of diligence the world would be a much different place. Had Christopher Columbus not demonstrated the positive perspective to see that the world was round, and the untiring persistence to "keep on keepin' on" until someone gave him the boats to prove it; chances are we would not be living as we do - or for that matter, we might not exist at all.

In the context of your own journey of discovery, it is vital that you follow your stage directions and acquire the characteristics of diligence. Don't concern yourself with the fact that you can't remember everything. Concentrate rather on the events you can recall. Diligently search through those memories and learn from them how your character has developed. You are going to be dealing with aspects of your personality which you have never confronted before. Nevertheless, endeavor to discover those things about yourself that are not pleasant because, like Columbus, only through such persistent, courageous searching will your new world appear.

Remember, diligence is not just sticking with a project until it is finished, it is also maintaining a positive attitude throughout the tedious process. Despite the hurdles you may encounter along your memory journey, diligence can help you to sustain the upbeat outlook necessary to "keep on keepin' on."

Shakespeare once observed that, "There is nothing good or bad, but thinking makes it so."

Therefore if you want a constructive change in your life, you must first make the positive decision to try. Your conscious choice to improve by perusing the secrets in your childhood memories is indeed a "good" step in the right direction. However your thinking must also include the resolve to stick with it. And that requires the added attitude of endurance, long-suffering and persistence. Such positive thinking requires Diligence.

It is good to keep in mind Peter's suggestion of this particular attribute; for diligence is the ingredient of every determined soul. Despite what tomorrow may bring, it's persevering qualities constantly whisper the enduring notion, "I'm always up...or getting up."

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