

**Subject: Life lessons come unexpectedly, and in small packages**

**Date:** Thu, 11 Mar 2004 22:56:50 +0000 (GMT)

**From:** Elizabeth James <cagebc@yahoo.com>

**To:** Mayor and Council <council@dnv.org>, Mayor and Council <council@district.west-van.bc.ca>,  
Mayor and Council <council@cnv.org>, Mayor and Council <lbarrett@bimbc.ca>,  
Mayor and Council <office@village.lions-bay.bc.ca>

**CC:** fonvca@fonvca.org

11 March 2004

How often, when we greet the morning, are we open to the realization that, "Today will be a special day; today I will be given a lesson that will enable me to be a small influence for good in this crazy world of ours."

Today is such a day for me. My daughter showed me a small book, authored by an American, Ron Clark - an 'accidental educator' - who has achieved wonders with some very troubled youngsters. Not only has he given them lives and hope beyond their dreams but, if we are open to the messages he gave those children, Clark's influence could spread throughout everything we do together.....and that includes me!

I pass it on for no reason, other than that I think you'll be interested.

His rules:-

1. Respond to adults
2. Make eye contact
3. Congratulate a classmate
4. Respect other students' comments, opinions and ideas
5. If you win, do not brag; if you lose, do not show anger
6. If you are asked a question in conversation, ask a question in return
7. Cover your mouth when you sneeze or cough and say excuse me
8. Do not show disrespect with gestures
9. Always say 'thank you' when given something
10. When you receive something, do not insult the gift or the giver
11. Surprise others by performing random acts of kindness
12. When grading other students' papers, give only the correct grade
13. Follow along when we read together in class
14. Answer all written questions with a complete sentence
15. Do not ask for a reward
16. You must complete your homework every day
17. Subject transitions will be swift, quiet and orderly
18. Be as organized as possible
19. When homework is assigned, do not moan or complain
20. When a substitute teacher is present, all class rules still apply
21. Follow the specific classroom protocols
22. You may bring a bottle of water to class, you may not leave for a drink of water during class
23. Know other teachers' names and greet them in the hall by name
24. Keep yourself and the bathrooms clean and germ-free
25. Greet visitors and make them feel welcome
26. Do not save seats in the lunchroom
27. Do not stare at a student who is being reprimanded
28. Call me if you have a question about homework and leave a message - once
29. [Learn and obey] The rules of etiquette
30. After dining in the cafeteria or elsewhere, be responsible for your trash
31. In a hotel room, leave a tip for the hotel workers who clean your room
32. On a bus, always face forward
33. When meeting new people, shake hands and repeat their name
34. When offered food, take only your fair share
35. If someone drops something and you are close to it, pick it up
36. Hold the door for people, rather than letting it close on them
37. If someone bumps into you, say 'Excuse me' even if it was not your fault
38. On a field trip, enter a public building quietly
39. On a field trip, compliment the place you are visiting
40. During an assembly, do not speak or call out to friends

41. At home, answer your phone in a polite and appropriate manner
42. When returning from a trip, shake the hands of every chaperone
43. On escalators, stand to the right, walk to the left
44. When walking in line, keep your arms at your sides and move quietly
45. Never cut in line
46. No talking in a movie theatre during the movie
47. Do not bring Doritos into the school building [a fun, personal rule]
48. If anyone is bullying you, let me know
49. Stand up for what you believe in
50. Be positive and enjoy life
51. Live so that you will never have regrets
52. Learn from your mistakes and move on
53. No matter the circumstances, always be honest
54. Carpe Diem
55. Be the best person you can be.

The above are the Chapter headings of this small book; they are rules we all learned long ago but sometimes forget. Some of Clark's experiences will likely bring a tear or two to the eye. The essence of the writing, however, appears on pages 186 and 187 towards the end of the book where Clark wrote the following paragraphs to his students:-

*"This year has the possibility of being one of the best years of your life. If you are willing to listen to me and do as I ask, we can make amazing things happen. You have to believe me, and you have to trust me. I am going to give 110 percent and work my hardest to make sure you get the best education possible. I don't care what grades you have had in the past, and I don't care what kind of trouble you have been in before; this is a new year, and we are going to have a new start, and I assure you, if you are willing to follow the rules and procedures and try your best, this year you will all be stars. Not only can we be the best class in this school, we can be the best class in this country."*

Perhaps if we, as a society, could only carry this philosophy forward into our daily lives, there would be no running red lights or street racing; no jaywalkers; no people 'choking' one another in caucus meetings; no parents yelling at kids on the ice; no Bertuzzi's crying in front of the cameras; no store clerks being harrassed by thoughtless customers; no dog-walkers ignoring leash by-laws or who 'don't see' the doggy-items they're leaving behind them; no neighbourhoods being harrassed by boors; no "007" candidate nominations; no skewed government 'dog and pony' shows or decisions for political, instead of community, benefit; one could go on forever.

The hope for the future is our children - and children learn most easily by the examples they are given.

Suffice it to say, I'm about to try to run all my behaviour through Ron Clark's screen and to "pass it on."

I wish I could buy everyone a copy of the book but, for those who are interested, the title is: "The essential 55." The cost is C\$29.95 and it can be found at Indigo.

Cheers, Liz

---

How much mail storage do you get for free? Yahoo! Mail gives you 6MB! [Get Yahoo! Mail](#)