

Everyday Greatness

by Stephen R. Covey

[Fertig Notes]

- The majority of people in this world are good people doing good things and we should not let the noise of the negative minority drown out the steady sound of good that is around us. Most of us know that the *good* we are doing does not always represent our *best*. Isn't that true for you?
- A transition person is one who breaks the flow of bad. In times of darkness, they are lights, not judges; models, not critics. In periods of discord, they are change catalysts, not victims; healers, not carriers. Today's world needs more transition persons.
- Everyday Greatness has to do with character and contribution, as distinguished from 'secondary greatness,' which has to do with notoriety, wealth, fame, prestige or position. Everyday Greatness is a way of living, not a one-time event.
- What are at its roots? **#1 – The Choice to Act** *Will we act upon life, or will we merely acted upon?* Our actions provide the truest answers. Many people say they want to stand by firm values, but then they let their integrity shrivel under the slightest bit of opposition. While we cannot always choose what happens to us, we can choose our responses.
- **#2 – The Choice of Purpose** *To what ends, or purposes, will our daily choices lead?* We see so many people hurriedly running from place to place, yet really going nowhere. DeWitt Wallace, founder of *Reader's Digest*, had written down as a young boy: "Whatever my occupation may be, I intend to do as much good in the world as possible, to help people help themselves."
- **#3 – The Choice for Principles** *Will we live our lives in accordance with proven principles, or will we suffer the consequences of not doing so?* Principles are immovable; they are timeless and universal. They do not change.
- The choice to act represents the energy we bring to life – our will power. The choice of purpose represents our destination – where we choose to go in life, what we choose to accomplish. The choice for principles determines the means for how we'll get there – how we will attain our goals.
- In our most reflective moments, each of us wants to make a difference – a contribution. We want to be part of something meaningful.
- Sister Antonia: There comes a time when you can't just be a spectator. You have to step outside the lines. I have never once felt there wasn't something I could do to make things better.
- Each person – regardless of age or status – will at various times encounter points when they must choose whether to step forward and make a difference or sit back and be a "spectator."
- James Thurber: It is not enough to be industrious; so are the ants. What are you industrious about?
- Albert Schweitzer: I have always held firm to the thought that each one of us can do a little to bring some portion of misery to an end.
- Yo-Yo Ma: The worst thing you can do is say to yourself, "I want to be just like somebody else." You have to absorb knowledge from another, but ultimately you have to find your own voice.
- Ralph Waldo Emerson: To laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty, to find the best in others; to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition; to know even one life has breathed easier because you lived. This is to have succeeded.
- George Eliot: What do we live for if not to make the world less difficult for each other?
- It is in giving of ourselves to others that we find our greatest sense of meaning. Each person blessed with success has an obligation to return part of that blessing. It is in forgetting ourselves and investing in others that we often reap the greatest dividends.
- Whether through a simple act of kindness, the offering of hope, a well-timed compliment or through lighting another's darkened path, opportunities for charity that extend beyond giving money are around every corner, every day.
- Mother Teresa: Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless.

- Often the most meaningful and lasting contributions or acts of charity are those that occur in small, one-on-one ways when attention is given to a solitary individual.
- One thing that always sets great leaders apart – that lifts them above the others – is that, regardless of the size or nature of their organizations, they never forget the worth of the individual.
- The key to the many is the one.
- Never underestimate the power of individual attention.
- Rosalynn Carter: A leader takes people where they want to go. A great leader takes people where they don't necessarily want to go, but ought to be.
- Of course the highest form of giving attention is to accept and love a person for who they are.
- Grambling football coach Eddie Robinson cared for every individual on his team. When they built a new stadium they placed a huge marker at the entrance: Robinson Stadium: "Where Everybody Is Somebody."
- It is so easy to make excuses, place blame on others, or argue that circumstances were against us. But we only progress in life to the extent that we take responsibility for our actions and attitudes, and put forth the initiative necessary to create our own circumstances.
- Everybody's had disappointments, and anyone can rationalize his actions. But none of that matters. The key is in our decisions, not our conditions.
- "If you want to accomplish anything in life, you can't just sit back and hope it will happen. You've got to make it happen, said Chuck Norris. "People whine, 'I haven't succeeded because I haven't had the breaks.' You create your own breaks."
- Despite what happens to us, we have the capacity to choose our responses – our attitudes, thoughts and actions.
- Wayne Dyer: The only thing blame does is keep the focus off you when you are looking for external reasons to explain your unhappiness or frustration. You may succeed in making another feel guilty of something by blaming him, but you won't succeed in changing whatever it is about you that is making you unhappy.
- Dwight D. Eisenhower: The search for a scapegoat is the easiest of all hunting expeditions.
- Happiness in life comes from the inside. It does us little good to sit back and wait for it to come from outside sources.
- Viktor Frankl: Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances – to choose one's own way.
- M. Charles Wheeler: Nowadays some people expect the door of opportunity to be opened with a remote control.
- John Wayne: Courage is being scared to death – and saddling up anyway.
- Courage is not the absence of fear, but the awareness that something else is more important.
- We must be willing to step out of our comfort zones and step up to our convictions through dignified acts of courage.
- Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one's courage.
- Jim Fiebig: There's a fine line between courage and foolishness. Too bad it's not a fence.
- Norman Vincent Peale: Too much caution is bad for you. It is usually wiser to stand up to a scary-seeming experience and walk right into it, risking the bruises or hard knocks. You are likely to find it is not as tough as you had thought. Or you may find it plenty tough, but also discover you have what it takes to handle it.
- Rudy Giuliani: Courage is about the management of fear, not the absence of fear.
- General Goerge S. Patton, Jr.: If bravery is a quality which knows not fear, I have never seen a brave man. All men are frightened. The more intelligent they are, the more they are frightened. The courageous man is the man who forces himself, in spite of his gear, to carry on.
- Taking charge of your life requires discipline. But discipline is neither readily attained nor easily maintained. It requires the fortitude to resist the pull of so many temptations that otherwise might lure us toward meaningless sideshows. But more than anything, it demands a relentless focus on what matters most.
- Joe Paterno: In 1972, I got an unexpected phone call from Bill Sullivan, former president and principal owner of the New England Patriots. "I want to meet with you to talk about coaching my team." I told Sullivan I'd had other offers and wasn't much interested in the pros. Then he hit me

with his package - \$1.3 million, plus part ownership of the franchise and a \$100,000 bonus for signing. I told him we had a deal. At 2:00am, I lay there thinking about the life I was leaving. Suddenly I knew what it was I had to do, what it was I *wanted* to do. I knew what college football means to me – and what pro football never could mean. I love winning ballgames as much as any coach does, but I know there's something that counts more than victory or defeat. I get to watch my players grow – in their personal discipline, in their educational development and as human beings. That is a deep lasting reward I could never get from pro ball.

- Courage is not being impervious to fear. It's being afraid, yet confronting fear.
- When we find purposes we truly wish to pursue, half-hearted commitments are not enough. Successful quests come only through steady, paced, every day efforts – practice after practice, night after night, step after step. Sometimes discipline is greatly encouraged by the sustaining help of a friend.
- No matter who you are, no matter what your pursuits, living a life of meaning requires discipline. And the key is that it is much easier to say no to temptations or easier, less meaningful options when we have a deeper yes burning within. Without discipline, the noble purposes we create in our minds are no more than hollow daydreams.
- Many people see discipline as the absence of freedom, when in fact it is the source of freedom.
- David Campbell: Discipline is remembering what you want.
- Abigail Van Buren: A bad habit never disappears miraculously; it's an undo-it-yourself project.
- Until you make peace with who you are, you'll never be content with what you have.
- The most important element we put into any goal or relationship is not what we say or what we do or what we have, but who we are.
- Oprah Winfrey: Real integrity is doing the right thing, knowing that nobody's going to know whether you did it or not.
- People with integrity are those whose words match their deeds and whose behaviors mirror their values. Their honesty and ethics can be trusted unconditionally. They honor commitments. They are dependable. They are known for doing the right things, for the right reasons, at the right times.
- Ethics are simple matters of right and wrong. It is only the practice of ethics that is difficult.
- The word *integrity* basically means integrated around principles. Integrity is an every day choice, an every day way of living.
- The reputation of a thousand years may be determined by the conduct of one hour.
- General Norman Schwarzkopf: I've met leaders in the army who were very competent – but they didn't have character. For every job they did well, they sought reward in the form of promotions, in the form of awards and decorations, in the form of getting ahead at the expense of someone else. I've also met a lot of leaders who had superb character but who lacked competence. They weren't willing to pay the price of leadership, to go the extra mile. To lead in the 21st century, you will required to have both character and competence.
- Martin Luther King, Jr.: The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.
- Confucius: To know what is right and not do it is the worst cowardice.
- There is no pillow so soft as a clear conscience.
- Humility is critical to effective leadership, yet conspicuously absent from too many executive resumes.
- Suzan Wiener: An ego trip is something that never gets you anywhere.
- Benjamin Whichcote: None are so empty as those who are full of themselves.
- Some people think they can push themselves forward by patting themselves on the back.
- William Ward: Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it.
- When eating fruit, think of the person who planted the tree.
- Charles Schwab: I have yet to find the man who did not do better work and put forth greater effort under a spirit of approval than under a spirit of criticism.
- All things are created twice. Vision is the first creation, it is the mental creation which always precedes the physical, or second, creation.
- A master among masters of vision was Walt Disney. His creative genius and sense of vision helped him to spot ideas invisible to others and to look ahead to future opportunities. In 1965,

sixteen miles southwest of Orlando, was an undeveloped wilderness, twice the size of Manhattan, which Walt Disney Productions had just purchased. Disney asked, "Wouldn't it be something if we could build a city here, an experimental community of tomorrow, where people could live without traffic or smog or slums?" "But, Walt," objected Joe Potter, a Disney VP, "that would cost hundreds of millions of dollars!" "Joe, can't you keep your mind on the subject and away from the inessentials?" It was a typical remark. Walt Disney was a whole industry in himself.

- Vision helps us see the possibilities of tomorrow within the realities of today, and motivates us to do what needs to be done.
- George Lucas: Dreams are extremely important. You can't do it unless you can imagine it.
- Jack Nicklaus: Achievement is largely the product of steadily raising one's levels of aspiration and expectation.
- Mia Hamm: Celebrate what you've accomplished, but raise the bar a little higher each time you succeed.
- It is not uncommon to come across a great little invention and think, I wish I had thought of that. But bringing even simple ideas to full fruition involves a process, one that is not always as easy as it may appear.
- Identify a need to take a financial risk to market testing to delivery to refinement. However, the real key to innovation is the principle of synergy.
- Certain people seem to have a knack for being creative. But if you observe them for any length of time, it becomes quickly evident their innovative powers do not appear by magic or luck. Indeed, it is no coincidence that innovative people also tend to be constant learners with broad interests.
- Leonardo da Vinci was born in 1452, the illegitimate son of a notary and a peasant girl. He assumed he was able to understand anything and remains the most gifted human being who ever lived. Did he have some mystical or innate gift of insight and invention, or was his brilliance learned and earned? Certainly he had an unusual mind and an uncanny ability to see what others did not. But the six thousand pages of detailed notes and drawings present clear evidence of a diligent, curious student – a perpetual learner in laborious pursuit of wisdom who was constantly exploring, questioning and testing. Expanding your mind is vital to being creative. Therefore, investing regularly in learning opportunities is one of the greatest gifts you can give yourself.
- Innovation follows a process. It begins with identifying a need and is followed by careful research, experimentation and the involvement of the right people to pursue the idea from birth to maturity. Sometimes the process spreads over years and requires loads of patience. Occasionally a little luck or serendipity speeds it along. But in most cases, the key to innovation is the people behind it – curious, persistent and knowledgeable, who can see things from multiple perspectives.
- The gift of imagination is at the core of your ability to innovate.
- Discovery consists of seeing what everybody has seen and thinking what nobody has thought.
- George Scialabba: Perhaps imagination is only intelligence having fun.
- Carl Wood: The person who knows how will always have a job. But the person who knows why will be his boss.
- Quality does not require a lot of expense, but it does require a careful attention to detail.
- Vince Lombardi: The quality of a man's life is in direct proportion to his commitment to excellence, regardless of his chosen field of endeavor.
- Leonardo da Vinci: Just as iron rusts from disuse, even so does inaction spoil the intellect.
- Robert Frost: The world is full of willing people; some willing to work, the rest willing to let them.
- Every human being from cradle to coffin responds to respect, responds to people who see and draw out their hidden potential.
- No matter what you do in this life, you need to develop one thing: a sense of direction.
- When we treat people with respect, we help them gain confidence and reveal inner potential that otherwise might go untapped.
- Todd Ruthman: It's the things in common that make relationships enjoyable, but it's the little differences that make them interesting.
- Pope John XXIII: See everything, overlook a great deal, correct a little.

- To gain empathy for another, we must listen to them with our eyes and hearts, as well as our ears. But most people do not listen with the intent to understand, but with the intent to reply.
- What we all hope for when we're feeling low or agitated or wildly happy is a friend who sounds as if she has all the time in the world to listen. This ability to be with someone in her pain or happiness is the cornerstone of genuine empathy. Squelch impulse to interrupt friends if they're confiding; learn to follow the other person's lead, pay attention to body language, facial expressions, tone of voice and what's left unsaid. We don't always want answers or advice. Sometimes we just want company...who understands us, or who will at least do their best to understand us. Empathic people learn to see things through others' eyes rather than filtered through their own autobiographies or philosophies. They know how to hold their tongue by not forcing their own stories, advice, judgment or opinions on others.
- Efficiency with people is usually ineffective. You can be efficient with things, but not with people. It is only when you are on the same page about what is important that efficiency with people can become effective.
- Listening with the intent to understand goes a long way toward allowing others to feel comfortable in expressing their thoughts and innermost feelings.
- Alfred Brendel: The word "listen" contains the same letters as the word "silent."
- George H. W. Bush: Don't confuse being "soft" with seeing the other guy's point of view.
- Tom Knight: Isn't it funny, when the other fellow takes a long time to do something, he's slow. When I take a long time to do something, I'm thorough. When the other fellow doesn't do it, he's lazy. When I don't do it, I'm busy. When the other fellow does it without being told, he's overstepping his bounds. When I go ahead and do it without being told, that's initiative. When the other fellow states his opinion strongly, he's bullheaded. When I state my opinion strongly, I'm firm. When the other fellow overlooks a few rules of etiquette, he's rude.
- Antisthenes: Pay attention to your enemies, for they are the first to discover your mistakes.
- A complementary team, family or work unit is one where strengths are made productive and weaknesses are made irrelevant – a point that is becoming more and more relevant as the world becomes increasingly interdependent.
- Finding unity among diversity is one of civilization's greatest challenges, yet working together is essential to the well-being of the whole.
- Leo Rosten: First-rate men hire first-rate men; second-rate men hire third-rate men.
- When we hold another down, we hold ourselves down, but when we lift another, we also lift ourselves.
- Much of the opposition we face in life ultimately works in our favor. It challenges us. It teaches us. It causes us to reach a little higher and dig a little deeper.
- There are ways to confront adversity and work your way through that mourning period. First, try to keep a youthful outlook. Then you don't bear grudges. And perhaps most important, you make every effort to be kind to yourself. Most of us tend to be far too critical. Forgive yourself for the dumb mistakes you've made.
- B. C. Forbes: Golf without bunkers and hazards would be tame and monotonous. So would life.
- Thomas Watson: Doing nothing is a comfortable alternative because it is without immediate risk, but it is an absolutely fatal way to manage a business.
- Leo Tolstoy: Everybody thinks of changing humanity and nobody thinks of changing himself.
- Marie Osmond: If you're going to be able to look back on something and laugh about it, you might as well laugh about it now.
- Aristotle: Anyone can become angry. That is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose and in the right way – that is not easy.
- Seneca: The greatest remedy for anger is delay.
- Abraham Lincoln: If I tried to read, much less answer, all the criticisms made of me and all the attacks leveled against me, this office would have to be closed for all other business. I do the best I know how, the very best I can. I mean to keep on doing this, down to the very end. If the end brings me out all wrong, then ten angels swearing I had been right would make no difference. If the end brings me out all right, then what is said against me now will not amount to anything.
- Malachy McCourt: Resentment is like taking poison and waiting for the other person to die.

- Robert Frost: In three words I can sum up everything I've learned about life: It goes on.
- Two of the greatest obstacles for people to overcome in life are failure and fatigue. Perseverance trumps both failure and fatigue.
- The two saddest words in any language: "*If only*." The trouble with "if only" is that it doesn't change anything. It keeps the person facing the wrong way – backward instead of forward. It wastes time. Everyone makes mistakes. Mistakes are what we learn from. Shift the focus. Change the key words and substitute "next time." Decide to apply the lessons learned from experience, however grim or painful it might have been. Push aside the roadblock of regret, move forward, take action and resume living. Apply this little trick to things that can still be remedied.
- A significant part of persevering and moving forward is leaving behind the baggage of the past.
- Dr. Judah Folkman keeps a 1903 *New York Times* article in which two physics professors explain why airplanes could not possibly fly in his archives. In the early 1970s, he proposed an idea in cancer research that did not fit what scientists "knew" to be true; that tumors did not generate new blood vessels to feed themselves and grow. He was convinced they did. But colleagues kept telling him his project was futile science. Folkman and his colleagues discovered the first angiogenesis inhibitors in the '80s. Today more than 100,000 cancer patients are benefiting from the research he pioneered, now recognized as being on the forefront in the fight to cure cancer. "There is a fine line between persistence and obstinacy," he says. "The key is to choose a problem that is worth persistent effort."
- The late leadership guru Peter Drucker once noted that the problem with all innovative ideas is that they quickly degenerate into hard work.
- Walter Elliott: Perseverance is not a long race; it is many short races one after another.
- Newt Gingrich: Perseverance is the hard work you do after you get tired of doing the hard work you already did.
- Tom Peters: Life is pretty simple. You do some stuff. Most fails. Some works. You do more of what works. If it works big, others quickly copy it. Then you do something else.
- Jan Glidewell: You can clutch the past so tightly to your chest that it leaves your arms too full to embrace the present.
- Benjamin Disraeli: Patience is a necessary ingredient of genius.
- We so often rush through life that we fail to take the time out to enjoy it.
- To think of the past is to regret it; to think of the future is to fear it. But the present! Is not that the only understandable reality?
- There is a significant difference between prioritizing your schedule and scheduling your priorities.
- Now and then it's good to pause in our pursuit of happiness and just be happy.
- It is not until you have a burning yes inside of you about what is truly important, that you can pleasantly, smilingly, cheerfully, say no to all of that which is urgent, but not truly important.
- The wisdom of life consists in the elimination of the non-essentials.
- Moss Hart: All the mistakes I ever made in my life were when I wanted to say No, and said Yes.
- When Henry Ford was asked why he went to his executives' offices instead of having them come to his, he said, "I've found I can leave the other fellow's office a lot quicker than I can get him to leave mine."
- If one's motives are wrong, nothing can be right. As long as you feel you are serving others, you do the job well. When you are concerned only with helping yourself, you do it less well. That is a law as inexorable as gravity.
- Herbert Prochnow: If you burn the candle at both ends, you may not be as bright as you think.
- Lee Iacocca: Over the years, many executives have said to me with pride, "Boy, I worked so hard last year I didn't take any vacation." I always felt like responding, "You dummy. You mean tell me you can take responsibility for an \$80,000,000 project and you can't plan two weeks out of the year to have some fun?"
- Edward Stanley: Those who think they have not time for bodily exercise will sooner or later have to find time for illness.
- Commit yourself to becoming a light, not a judge; a model, not a critic.