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CLEAR THINKING

from Uncommon Knowledge

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In this month's Clear Thinking...

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Hi

Autumn is about to fall on us as the days get shorter and the leaves begin to turn. Although the year's ending is coming into view, this is also a time when people make new beginnings as the new school year gets into swing. Time to learn something new!

How about putting some effort into being funny? What would you gain? How might your life (and your friends) benefit if you get funnier than you used to be? Our thought provoking article on real funniness will get you started.

And if you hope to learn something new you'll understand the importance of having an open mind, as our Teaching Tale makes clear. Make sure YOU don't miss opportunities because of mistaken assumptions.

Funny or not, our inspiring quote will remind you to focus on what 'is' if you really want a tranquil life.

- doesn't have immediate obvious merits we can instantly assume it is therefore worthless. Things which don't instantly fit with our notions of 'good' or 'strong' or 'useful' can be disregarded. And that can lead to us losing out. Consider the following tale...

An unusual skill

Once upon a long ago three strong young men set out on a long journey together. They knew their quest would be perilous, with many threats and dangers along the way. They made sure they had plenty of food and provisions to share.

They had been on their way just a few days when they turned a bend and came upon what appeared to be a pile of rags in the road. As they drew nearer they realized the 'pile of rags' was a frail looking old man. They were about to pass him by when he called out to them:

"Please, dear friends, allow me to travel with you! There are many bandits in these parts, and I may be able to offer some protection."

The strong young travelling companions were amazed, and could not help bursting out laughing. "And just what good would you be in a fight? What skills could you bring to the journey?"

The ancient eyed them steadily: "I can imitate any animal!" he said.

The travellers thought this was simply uproarious. But they decided to allow the ancient fellow to accompany them at least until they grew bored with him.

A few days later, as the sun was setting, a dozen bandits suddenly appeared from the twilight of the forest trees and set upon them. The three young companions fought valiantly, but were outnumbered and overcome. The bandits tied them up and set about looting their provisions. They didn't bother tying up the ancient as clearly he had no strength to resist or run away.

When they had gathered all the travellers' belongings, the leader of the bandits stared at his captives: "We have taken all we can from you, and now all that remains is for you to die, as dead men do not speak to the authorities about bandits in the night..."

But at the very moment he drew his sword to slay the unfortunate friends, a might roar came from the forest. The stunned cut-throat stayed his sword as the ancient cried out: "Ah! That was a lion! He says he has many friends and is hungry for bandit food!"

The astonished robber leader turned to the ancient: "How do you know what he was saying? Can you speak with the animals?"

"Yes, indeed I can. Observe!"

And the frail old man proceed to shout questions into the forest in his feeble old man's voice. But using his unusual skill, he made it seem each time as if a powerful lion was roaring back in answer. So convincing was he that the bandits began to be afraid. The bandit chief asked him: "And what is the lion saying right now?"

"He is saying," replied the frail one, "that if you untie those three succulent looking morsels, he and his friends will come and devour them and leave me and you and your men to go free. He commands you to untie them this instant!"

Quicker than in no time at all the three captives were untied. An even greater and deeper roar came from the forest.

"The lion commands you and your men to turn away while he and his friends come to devour the three men," interpreted the old man.

So the bandits turned away, and as they did so, the ancient produced such a hideous and convincing mixture of sounds from his throat that it sounded for all the world as if a horrible munching and tearing and devouring was occurring right there. And during this time, of course, the three companions quickly reclaimed their possessions and made off on their horses as fast as they could go.

"You can turn around now!" said the ancient. "It was horrible! The lions devoured every last scrap of those poor men!"

"We need you!" said the relieved bandit chief. "Ride with us and be our channel to the animal kingdom!"

“Thank you, but I have work elsewhere” responded the ancient and he walked off down the road. Some miles further on he came across the three very grateful companions waiting for him. They eyed him with new respect now. He had seemed nothing yet had turned out to be everything. And each and every one of them from that day forwards learned to wait and hold a space in their minds before filling them with assumptions as to what would or wouldn’t be useful...

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3: Inspiring Quote: Tranquillity

“Seek not that the things which happen should happen as you wish; but wish the things which happen to be as they are, and you will have a tranquil flow of life.”
Epictetus, Greek philosopher associated with the Stoics, 55 – c.135

“Status quo, you know, is Latin for ‘the mess we’re in’.”
Ronald Reagan, 40th US President, 1911 – 2004

Constantly dwelling on what might, or might not happen, in the future may cause you to miss out on all the good things that are happening in the present.

The present can seem a mess, but each period of life has its blessings and its problems.

What about you?

Do you fully appreciate the positives of your present situation?

Or are you too preoccupied with the future to notice them?

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That's all for this month -
we hope you enjoyed it and we'll see you next month!

Roger Elliott & Mark Tyrrell

