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Editorial Musings

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Some time ago I watched with great interest a program about the latest developments regarding DNA. The scientific information itself was fascinating, but I took away from the program some wonderful wisdom regarding living life. That wisdom is what I'd like to share with you here. None of this advice is new, but all of it bears repeating.

First, take the long-term view of life. Make it a habit to see beyond the immediate. The nature of all life is *change*, and like it or not, our job as rational human beings is to learn to accept that inevitable fact. We can hate it, or we can try to fight against it, but change will occur, with or without us. Accepting that fact and adapting ourselves to it with the long-term view in mind is ultimately our acceptance of life itself.

Second, if you have a new idea about something, perhaps especially in the field of alternative medicine, and you know that idea is a good one, pursue that idea, no matter what others may say. If you study how many of the things we know and appreciate today came about, you will see immediately that the inventor was all too often surrounded by nay-sayers.

Alternative medicine practitioners have undoubtedly encountered this negativity at some point, and yet we persevere. We know our ideas are good, but new concepts seem threatening to many others—until at last, they are accepted. Acceptance takes time, however, so perseverance must be the watchword.

Third, keep exploring throughout your life. The horizons of knowledge are endless, limitless. The only limits are those we put on ourselves. If there's one concept I get impatient with, it's the concept of "my comfort zone." So often I encounter those who will say, "Oh, I don't want to do that. It's out of my comfort zone." Thus, they shut themselves off from new friendships and new experiences, refusing to go beyond what they already know. That's just sad. The reaction is based in fear, of course, but I fear that one's comfort zone becomes a prison of both body and mind. Resist such self-limitation!

Fourth, make bountiful use of the wondrous imagination with which the human mind is blessed. The human imagination can take us places that do not even exist to the physical eye. Leonardo da Vinci was one who envisioned remarkable things well beyond what his century was capable of bringing to fruition. The author Jules Verne was another such imaginative person; his novels foretold undersea exploration before others thought such a thing was possible. Imagination knows no limits, so why not let it soar?

And that thought leads me inevitably to AI. One of the aspects of AI that scares me most is that some will come to depend upon AI for almost everything. But AI is not human; AI cannot imagine and invent. If we as individuals do not cultivate our imaginations, where will new ideas come from? The outcome of what I would deem an excess dependence upon technology is of course unknown. But without imagination, the willingness and ability to think beyond anything

that has been thought before, we cannot progress but will continue in cycles of history that simply repeat themselves.

Those cycles of history should serve to guide us into the future. That is the final point I wish to make, that we absolutely must be open to learning from our past mistakes. In the medical world, we finally realized that bleeding a patient half to death might not be the best way to achieve a cure. We came to see that aberrant behavior, insanity, might not in fact be a punishment from God. We discovered that a vaccine for measles prevented children from contracting that terrible disease. And yet we now see the renewed spread of measles, once thought eradicated, because so many parents mistakenly refuse to vaccinate their children. I had measles AND mumps AND chicken pox as a child, and all I can say is that if a vaccine had been available at the time, I gladly would have accepted it. We seem, in this matter at least, to be determined to go backwards in time.

But—a ray of hope—if we determinedly take a long-term view of life, if we pursue good ideas and use our imaginations, if we continue to explore unknown horizons, then perhaps humanity will progress. These are the ideas I adhere to, since these are the ideas that do fill me with hope for the future.

Bio:

Dr. Kendra Gaines received her doctorate in English Literature from Northwestern University in Chicago, Illinois. She taught at Northwestern, as well as University of Michigan, before moving to Tucson. At the University of Arizona, she served for 16 years as Senior Tutor and Instructional Specialist in, first, the Department of English, and then at the UA's Writing Skills Improvement Program. Dr. Gaines has taught at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base for almost 30 years, teaching for Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Chapman University, Park University, and Pima College. Dr. Gaines teaches online as well. She is completing her seventeenth-year teaching both English and Philosophy courses for Colorado Technical University. She has also been teaching online for Park University, work which has included several blended (both online and in person) courses and is a full Professor of English at Akamai University.

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