

LESSON IN LIVING

BEFORE & AFTER

Elma Allen Milano

In my humble opinion, one of the best ways to determine the worth of any activity is by the way we feel afterwards. Beforehand, when I am thinking of what to do, I may ask myself how I will feel afterwards; it is a big help. When I used to ask my dad's advice, he would often respond by asking, "*One hundred years from now, who will know the difference?*" Other folks have advised me to ask, "*What would Jesus do?*" When I have a decision as to whether I should attend an event or not, I have asked myself, "*What would I do if I were in charge?*" One time when I did this and decided to attend a particular meeting (which was not one of my favorites) I was glad I did so. Why? When I arrived, I found the building full of eager listeners, and, believe it or not, they were all waiting for me because I was the speaker! The man in charge issued the invitation months before, while in a crowded room, and had made no follow-up contacts, so, I had forgotten about it! Instead of arriving fifteen minutes early, as I usually did when giving a talk, I arrived right on time much to the relief of those presiding. I felt very humble and fervently prayed for guidance. Thank goodness, I was experienced, and had sufficient material from memory, so it turned out O.K.

I have over 100 quotes that I enjoy; they are handy when giving talks and making decisions. Here is one of my favorites: "*That which does the most good for the most people for the most time is right.*" This has helped me many times.

Most of our regrets stem from what we DID do; but a few may also come from what we did NOT do. For example, before I married, while still living in Los Angeles, I had an opportunity to invest in some of the world's largest and most successful corporations, which are still prospering today. Because of being cautious, I turned them down and lost out on moneymaking opportunities. Today, being of the same cautious nature, I still prefer to invest in charitable organizations, my own business and family, and trusted friends.

Strangely enough, if we were to learn of other people's trials and tribulations, we usually would not want to trade them for our own. It is quite comforting to know we survived harrowing times that belonged to us alone.

No matter how enthused we are BEFORE holidays and big events, it helps to know there will also be letdowns AFTER these exciting times. We can think of large affairs in three steps: 1=get ready, 2=do it, 3=finish up. Step 3 is the least popular. It can be dubbed as "after-vacation blues," or "after-holiday-letdown." It helps to be aware that this will happen.

Exercising, practicing music, doing the dishes, paying bills, filing income taxes are all step 3 activities that leave us with good feelings AFTERWARDS. Think on it! Plan ahead! Try to develop self-control by maintaining the same enthusiasm for all 3 steps. Good luck!

This was written in 2004 when E/ma was 84-years-of-age. The entire series of Lessons in Living may be found on Lintonmilano.com.