

Fingerposts to Greatness

Directions for a Journey of Greatness



Maxwell Dodd

Fingerposts to Greatness

Fingerposts to Greatness

For Tilli

Maxwell Dodd

A GIFT OF ENCOURAGEMENT

maxwelldodd.com

Spooner Dodd Consulting Services

Post Office Box 462

EDGECLIFF NEW SOUTH WALES 2027

A U S T R A L I A

maxwelldodd.com@gmail.com

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT...as we begin

We are all masterpieces of the very highest order. We are all geniuses and heroes. We are all the possessors of qualities of brilliance. We are told we can be anything, do anything and have anything. All this is utterly true and yet we fail daily to meet any of these standards. Our lives are limited and shallow and our experience bleak and restricted.

What to do?

Let me ask you a further question. Imagine that tomorrow is your birthday and that it is a neat 100 years since you first appeared as a screaming bundle of urine and faeces. No one can answer the question “Did you lead a totally complete life?” honestly and say “I did.” The honest answer that should be given is “I did not do everything but I have had a very rich varied and diverse life of great challenge and much accomplishment and I pass beyond satisfied that to the extent possible I have made the most of my time.” One of the definitions of “success” is that the individual met God’s inner compass. If you could say that, you can say probably as much as you can.

A Gift of Encouragement is an operation here to assist you on the very personal journey of living that may make possible your providing the answer set out in the last paragraph. It is concerned only with you as an individual. It is not interested in social solutions or business solutions or religious solutions. I simply want you to be able to say that you made the most of your time and that the world probably gained something by your being here.

This is a work of individual possibility. It is interested only in what individuals can do. It is recognised that human beings are social animals and that there is an underlying cosmic architecture of unity that is propounded so effectively by the Eastern spiritualities. This is not however a work seeking religious conversion or the adoption of an arcane system on which to build one’s life. It is interested in the dignity and worth and freedom of the individual and in that individual’s enormous,

if often almost totally undiscovered, genius and brilliance. The only disappointment in life is that you did not try – or try hard enough. *This is a work of guidance on action.*

There are people who are motivators who can offer individuals recognition of their power to find for themselves careers and all the falderal of the world of business and commerce. There are people who will assist as life coaches whose function will be to ensure that careers are more fully developed than might otherwise be the case. There are people who can offer support when the demands of life and the complexities of the workaday world become too much. Whole professions exist in aid of our growth and yet the general simple principle of growth and possibility is rarely offered as one united and simple approach. This work is intended to do just that. By doing so, it is offering the highest view of any individual to be and to do and to have – and perhaps, most importantly, to become.

A Gift of Encouragement is a thoroughgoing approach to the full development of the total being, physical, intellectual, emotional and, of course, and most importantly, spiritual. It is interested in your journey to wholeness and full functioning. It is concerned to ensure that you recognise that the journey to wholeness is of you alone and that nothing really can be done for you. I can discuss with you as an impartial (and if you wish, highly partial) adviser all manner of the questions of your life but the fundamental will always be that you must lead your own life and that you must take a total responsibility for it in all its dimensions. *You are you and that is a fact to be celebrated.*

What is set out are many brief commentaries on the journey to wholeness which are based on a worldwide contact with people in all manner of places and activities. The questions that are dealt with are those that have been met in practice and relate to the concerns that are most commonly thrust at us. The guidance is therefore very broad and not remotely concerned with detail. The detail of your life is of you and for you and not for anyone else. That comes not from our lack of interest or concern but our determination to ensure that the advice we give can be given a suitable application to the dilemmas and challenges of life in such a way as will offer maximum benefit to that most important of all individuals, *you*.

Read on and be blessed and enjoy the Adventure.

COURAGE

The first signpost for any journey to the development of one's whole being will be courage. It needs bravery, daring, a sense of the morning chill on the face. The world is very respectful of courage, that strange capacity to step forward into the void without any guideposts or certainty of a safe answer. It will stand back and let the brave man go through. The great message of courage is that it will awe lesser men.

The journey of effective and complete living will never be fully undertaken without much of it. I recall with deep affection and a smile long speeches being made to me about "comfort zones." We are indeed surrounded by them. We have built up our lives in the world of the unchanging and feel most uncomfortable when we find that the patterns of certainty we have come to know are under question or review. This is very alarming and our initial reaction will always be to avoid the challenge of the different; the consequence may be discomfort. So true. It may be painful; it may be all manner of things, but the one thing that is most likely is that the test will be met successfully if only we try to win.

We have all been struck dumb when we have faced a challenge from something so simple as telephoning a stranger with a request that that stranger do something of benefit to us. Remember being a teenager telephoning a pretty girl with an invitation to a party. Remember being the man of the world about to telephone the bank in order to borrow money to buy the house of your dreams in which to live and love with your new wife and perhaps your new baby. We all know the stirrings in the stomach and the sense that "we" could not possibly succeed. We have even known the occasional rejection but that must never deter us from trying again. A wise mathematician pointed out the mathematics of success and failure is that one must try on only one more occasion than one failed in order to succeed. Life is full of examples in all manner of activities of those who have tried and those who have not. But the mathematics is so simple as to be frightening.

Dream your dream and start the journey. If your first effort is not a success, try again and again. Daring will engender courage and a greater determination to keep on with the task. Growth comes from effort and continuity. Boldness is not only

rejecting the old but also remembering to “keep on keeping on” as the advertising slogan of another day put it so well.

DISCIPLINE

Getting out of bed every morning on time every time requires discipline. The armed forces make much of discipline at its most demanding: it becomes almost a joke but one has only to look at the quality of the presentation of the young soldier or naval rating and ask his mother what she thinks of this remarkable transformation. Discipline externally applied is one thing: what about discipline that is self-administered?

One thinks of the sporting hero who has trained and trained. One thinks (though unfortunately it is often seen to be less accessible) of the student who has struggled with education and especially the one who has attained some remarkable tertiary qualification against all the odds. One is reminded of the concert pianist whose childhood was constant boring practice. But who could deny the magic of what those fingers can produce? One thinks of the demands of going without that touch the lives of achievers – whatever may be the particular area of their attainment.

Discipline is hardly boring. It does mean that one will go without in order to have later and more. It does require a willingness to take steps that are uncomfortable and to do without. It requires strength that the individual may doubt that he has.

For all that, the desire to be or to do or to have at another time in larger measure is only going to be had no matter what the context with the firm application of self-discipline. It seems so cold and so uncomfortable.

It is the way to the future and is the prize of the courageous. And its most remarkable quality is that the more one comes to lead a life of self-discipline, the life of understanding the importance of the denial now in the name of some much larger later, the easier it becomes. The joy of discipline is indeed in just that. It becomes not the habit of the weak but the practice of the strong and the achieving.

It becomes the way of life of those whose lives are accomplished and full.

COMMITMENT

Having dealt with courage and discipline, we are compelled to deal with that other extremely unlikely and distasteful quality of the accomplished: *commitment*.

Courage and discipline will amount to little in the longer term without commitment. Commitment is the quality of being able to see the longer term when the shorter term would intrude. It is the ability to understand that the direction is one of the intended outcome and that the result has to be seen at all times during the undertaking. I see so many advertisements in the press and on billboards for all manner of strange treatments to help those who are addicted to nicotine to do something about it. What is even suggested is that the journey to freedom from the dreaded weed will be made easier by the application of the treatment. This is true (or may be). But the longer term freedom from something that we now seem to understand to be less than helpful will only come with the day to day application of the simple quality of commitment to the task of obtaining freedom.

Nothing worthwhile is going to be had in a few easy minutes. All that is valuable in life takes time and will require the commitment of so much of it to the result. That is commitment: the firm resolve that the object is more important than the various temptations that will arise along the path. It, like all things in the field of growth, will become easier and easier. The man who has a large successful business (and who has almost certainly had all manner of major setbacks and disasters along the way) only came to have the business and the things that the success of the business has allowed him of material benefits because when the going got tough, tough got going.

Tough got going – that says it all. Do you have the courage and the discipline to be committed? *You do*. But you will first have to stay with the task to find out.

TRUST

The most extraordinary statement of human openness. Trust comes in two guises. There is the trust of another – that wonderful gift of one's own being to another. It is the basis of any fruitful human connexion from marriage to a business partnership. There is the trust in oneself – that equally wonderful comfort within one's own being that one is able to meet successfully all the challenges that life will offer. Trust in oneself will usually be rather well evidenced by the ability to take the risks of trust in another.

We are told rightly that trust is a manifestation of love. It challenges us to deal with another as though that other were an equal of our own being. Frightened small people will never trust and never know the blessing of the deep bonding with another soul that is made possible. It will involve risk in an age when, to use an insurance term that I find appalling, we are said to be "risk-averse." And yet the deepest blessings in life turn on the willingness to trust and to surrender some part of ourselves only to find that as ever giving means more and not less. There are as ever paradoxes to be found here but that in no way diminishes the worth of the risks or the blessings to flow from taking them successfully.

Trust also connotes the willingness to trust yourself. In this regard it ties back directly to courage and commitment. The great lesson we are seeking to offer in more detail than normal is the adequacy of the individual in facing the challenges of life day to day. The message may be seen to be mildly revolutionary but its truth is in no way thereby diminished. *You will be surprised to find how competent you are.* Very often the test is the willingness to be exposed to risk.

It is interesting to see young people undertaking extreme sports as they are called. They are learning something very valuable. They have had to trust themselves that, in throwing themselves off a bungee jump, for example, they will gain something from the experience. They have also had to trust the rope and those who set it up. The parachutist will pack his own parachute. Again total trust in oneself and in one's own capacity to fold it correctly in order to ensure a smooth unfolding when the time comes.

Trust ennobles. You are better and bigger for it when it is given to you by another and indeed you are more when you trust another. It may be abused. But the journey of successful living requires that the individual be willing to trust himself (most important) and those around him. The world will be taken forward every time one trusts.

Give it a run and be surprised how much joy it brings you.

CONFIDENCE

The magic that makes victory and accomplishment possible. Again it is two sided – the confidence in oneself (a gift so rarely given it seems) and the confidence in others (a gift not much more often given).

Self-confidence is the great lubricant that takes us beyond the fears and limitations of the self and the fears we so easily entertain of ourselves and of our impoverished splendour. We were taught that it was bombastic to be excessively forceful but the lesson of life has to be that those who can walk into a situation and make the most of it are the ones most likely to come away from it with the reward sought.

We build systems of caution and therefore develop expectations of failure when we ought to be enlarging, in all our day to day experience, the very patterns that take us into the unfamiliar. The unknown is the great challenge and the strange unexpected (perhaps) ability to deal with it our heritage. The more we challenge our fears and our concerns of our lack of some quality that is required to succeed, the more certain we are of finding a victory in our own clear terms.

Confidence is the consequence of training and experience. We must have new experience in order to learn: we actually learn to cope, and to manage. We have learnt that we are able to deal with a whole range of situations that may previously have concerned us. We must keep on challenging ourselves until the expectation of a fruitful outcome of any contact is so axiomatic that we do not ever expect any other response. The remarkable quality of the confident is the capacity to find imaginative answers to all the dilemmas and the questions.

With the head held high, the shoulders swept back, the stomach flat, and the chin held in, we can march into any situation of the unknown with a new vigour and self-possession and come away victorious.

In short, confidence is a quality we can learn. We acquire it by the simple principle of constant practice, of taking ourselves daily into yet deeper waters and finding in

ourselves yet richer qualities of accomplishment. I was fascinated to read that the great wit of another age, the hilarious Mae West, (“Come up and see me sometime”) rehearsed *ad nauseam* her most famous supposedly spontaneous lines. She had learnt, so I read, as had at another time, the memorable W.C. Fields, that there was no substitute for rehearsal and training. She had so great a confidence that her ease of response was legendary. That confidence came entirely premeditated. A real lesson for us.

Confidence is always at its best when it is the quality conferred upon us by others. The quality of being able to be comfortable in all circumstances will reflect upon the way in which we are treated. We resent being patronised as much as we are offended by arrogance. And yet it is our own lack of self-confidence and its vigorous presentation that will lead to such responses. We need to have confidence in those with whom we deal – this is especially true in the context of professional advisers whose integrity we assume without question. This is a form of confidence that cannot be gainsaid. And yet those in whom we invest confidence are entitled to have confidence in us. The strange cycle has again been created.

Confidence and self-confidence. The world needs these qualities as it moves forward. They are within you. Only you, however, can bring them to the light of day.

MEDITATION

The wholeness to which you aspire will be our guidance to a wholeness that encompasses the spiritual you as much as any other dimension. Complete living will never deny another measure of you, however little it may come within the purview of scientific enquiry.

A Gift of Encouragement will see the development and nourishment of your spiritual being as having a major role to play in the completeness of being to which we hope you will aspire. The spiritual being in you however is not the religious being, but an inner meditative being encountered in the course not only of the day of activity but at the times (equally diurnal) of meditation.

Meditation connotes silence and stillness and the highly paradoxical element of seeking to empty the mind. It will involve no specific procedure though an outline of what will aid in the journey will be offered. We would recommend that you proceed within, in the daily discipline (itself again highly paradoxical) of making an effort to find no effort. You will find that profound relaxation of mind and body and emotions will take you into deeper realms of your own consciousness and richer experiences of empowerment that will surprise you. The true balance of the being will be as spiritual and meditative as it would be active in thinking and doing. We can recommend a gentle outline of silence, stillness, a physically relaxed sitting position (Zen Buddhism calls this *zazen*) allied to a breath of ever slowing measure. A straight back seems to be significant as well.

All that we understand of the attainments of the dynamic and the accomplished is that the failure of such people to nourish their inner lives constitutes the reason that so many whose lives are externally successful seem to have failed so dismally to find enrichment of being. Net worth may interest a banker but it has little to do with the accomplishments of the totally successful (or the self-transcendent).

Over the journey of the years, the meditator will find a slow but steady (and astonishingly gently paced) increase in the conscious awareness of his (or her) own

being. He will find that his life has seemed to take on a shape and order not to mention a clarity of being and peace of heart of which he could only have dreamed when he started. The Eastern teachers will tell you that there is absolutely no way in which this can be predicted either as to time or as to form. Order and dignity (and the discovery of a remarkably rich and unerring intuition) will come but the journey is itself its own destination.

Everything we would seek to offer to a world in need of people of quality and personal excellence, those who make the world turn and those whose lives are expressions of a wider harmony, turns on this meditative quality. Success as we have already pointed out seems to have more to do with meeting the very substance of oneself rather than something that can be externally measured as in possessions or even prestige. Meditation is the balance that lives of energy and vigour and direction most seem to need. There is a point of guidance in Zen Buddhism that speaks of *action in inaction*.

True balance means just this. The highflier in you will need never to forget this: his failures in this dimension of his life will prove the largest of all his disappointments.

BALANCE

Balance is the true test it is said of success. Whether we have made millions and established large commercial or professional empires or whether we have simply known a life of colour and richness in other ways, the test of the success we have known is not to be found in our net worth but in reflections from the lives of our children, our wives (or husbands) and our friends.

There is a place for the economically successful: the world is in real need of people of energy and purpose who create capital which then will employ others in its enlargement and maintenance. And yet they of all people need to be careful to ensure that their economic success has not come at the price of fractured personal associations with wives and families.

There has to be a recognition that none of us is of one dimension, however much at any one time, one of the elements of our being may be predominant. I expect my advisers when dealing with me as a client to be giving me the full benefit of their knowledge and their experience. But there must be times for meditation, for exercise, for the simple delight of enjoying the love of others, even the innocent pleasure of taking the family dog for a walk. The dog's joy at such a contact (not the walk, itself) will be its own reward.

Like everything else, just how balance will work itself out in any life is far beyond the purpose of this little guidebook. We can do no more than alert you to its need and leave to you, as we do all questions, anyway, to determine how that balance lies and how to adjust the conflicts and pressures of life to find suitable harmony. That harmony is there to be found but you alone must find it as a result of a deeply considered and richly meditated (a very useful application of meditation, indeed) pondering. Silence is a better instrument for the management of the question and the comprehension of its answer than any form of activity.

Balance is not easy to find. It will require effort and considerable time with those for whom it will matter. That it may be hard to find a suitable allocation of time does

not diminish the need to make the effort or the worth of seeking a result. Those around you who matter most to you will be the ones most to be rewarded by the making of the effort. Their delight at your making it will assist you to find the appropriate answer.

Nothing here is however a criticism of the busy executive or professional man whose life seems to be an almost permanent telephone call. There is a place for enormous success materially in life but it has to come in conjunction with other successes in the maintenance of balance and clarity. When it does the economic reward will be yet more valuable.

JOY

We are intended in life to experience the richest of joy. We are built to find a quality of delight and warmth in life, indeed, ecstasy, that will lift and enlarge. That joy is part of the very balance in life to which we should be aspiring.

Joy is a deep seated inescapable delight in all that happens from the unexpected pleasure of the return of an old friend to the wonders of a vividly bright sunset. Its manifestations are so varying as to defy enumeration.

Joy is our natural being. It is not to be confused with pleasure though the events that confer pleasure are not to be denied. We are not to deny pleasure – there is nothing more bleak than the life of a monk who thinks that a long face is part of the Universe's requirement of us in terms of effective living. We were born to smile and to laugh. We are aware that laughter does seem to make the world go round. We should know much of it.

The riches of joy are easy to find. They turn on the willingness to find the positive and the growing in all the experiences of life. It is possible to find something lighter and easier to deal with in the course of the daily round but the effort at finding it is in the first instance a conscious one. It is interesting to observe that those whose lives are spent in geriatric hospitals still seem to be able to find balance in their own lives notwithstanding the burdens that they witness daily. Detachment is a very true virtue.

Joy is your nature and delight, your very birth-right. Never be afraid of them – they are the true manifestations of lives that are creative and effective. Laughter and all that will enrich are your right. Make the most of them and celebrate the wonders of being alive. Greater joy will lie ahead if only you know where to look.

VISION

Perhaps the most important quality to be mentioned. “Without a vision, the people perish” – what is thought to be famous Biblical advice that is indeed not in the Bible. How true, for all that!

Vision is the recognition that without a purpose, without a destination, the journey is of no meaning. Life is not the mere question of daily survival: it is the creative and energetic application of all that we are to the attainment of the magic of having made the most of ourselves. Vision is the tool by which all that is worth doing is to be attained. Whether the object be the personal one of passing the final school examinations, the social one of being a member of a sporting team that finally achieved the result of winning the championship (especially if the season started badly), or the widest aim of being on the winning side in major international conflict, nothing worth doing will ever be attained without the simplicity of a vision of what it is that one is seeking. It should be open to the definition of one word – a victory, a win, a pass, a success. It is that vision that will draw the visionary forward.

It is odd that in the world in which we live with its rather tawdry materialistic attitudes to challenge, the word “visionary” is seen to be pejorative. It is a word that connotes something vague or woolly or simply sentimental. Never be put off. Clarity will come only with the simplest and clearest of purpose and the sharpest “focus” upon its attainment. Vision is the only way to see the way ahead and it is in fixing goals that the vision will be more certainly determined.

Goals will be so necessary as the embodiments of vision. Whether it be the obtaining of a degree at a university or the successful administration of a commercial programme by which a new product is launched upon the market, the purpose (the goal) must be clear and the standards of its attainment sharply identified. No commercial campaign will succeed without the recognition of what it is intended to do both in its short term and in its long term. This is true just as much in the conduct of our lives. We seek careers and marriage and yet we do so without any clear thought of what any of that will mean or of the interesting questions to be answered along the way. We may even see career not as a form of personal satisfaction (a deep

pity) but merely as a means of earning the means of economic survival. Vision would suggest something larger and wider.

Something larger and wider. How right. The only something larger and wider that has any meaning is the largest, biggest, grandest you can imagine. *Dream, have visions, imagine*: these are all tools on the journey to the final satisfaction in living. All that you want is yours to be had but only if you have a vision of yourself and what you can do with all that you have been given. Vision is the eyes for the future and practicality the eyes of the present. Do you have eyes for the future or will you lapse into the dreariness of survival?

The choice is yours and is inescapable.

CHOICE

Life is constant choice. The most successful in life (and that connotes levels of success in areas far removed from the merely economic) are aware that their lives have involved moment to moment choices from which they did not flinch. Choice is so axiomatic that the failure to choose is choice. One cannot escape the demands and obligations that it imposes upon us: freedom to choose is our birth-right.

Choice comes back to the essential dignity and worth of the individual and his right to be free. The strange thing is that we seek the comfort of having choice taken from us and for the sake of a mess of pottage we surrender our freedom to economic and social systems and politicians (usually untrustworthy individuals with ambitions to exercise choices of their choice and not of yours). Fascism and Communism are terrible blots on the planet's recent history because they both involved totalitarianism and the loss of the individual freedoms whose celebration is the stuff of this little *opus*.

Choice and freedom are the two qualities that confer upon us all the dignity that we have. We are capable of anything – we may become anything and we may finally attain a quality of profound inner comfort and joy that nothing can disturb. That quality will however come only with the most rigorous determination to engage the right of choice with total fearlessness. Our deepest fears and concerns will have a strange capacity to surface when we least want them to do so because we are faced by the wonders of choice. Your deepest gremlins (and we know that they exist) will have a field day of telling you that this choice will be so dangerous when that choice will be so much safer even if the rewards it confers will be so fewer and less satisfying.

Everything contained in all we offer is that individuals are kings and geniuses and heroes and champions. We are all just that. And yet in the attainment of those qualities that will give colour and vigour to our lives, we are all called to make choices.

I heard a story only a day or so ago that amused me. It was of a very successful

businessman with a clear vision of what he is seeking to attain being restricted by the unintelligent fears of a business colleague. The dispute was short and sharp and said so much of two people. One had chosen to go forward and the other could see the risks. Each had made a choice but the one who had made the choice in the confidence of his own capacity to deal with whatever might come successfully went forward and achieved. The other sat on the side-lines and wondered why others had accomplished more.

There is a thing called “prudence” but one has to be very careful not to allow our fears to win in the battle for our souls. Everything is a choice – to do or not to do, to be or not to be (Shakespeare said it all), to have or not to have. All is choice and the responsibility of that choice is yours.

Make all choices with fearlessness and march forward – you will be surprised how adequate you will find yourself to be.

PREPARATION

It is so obvious that one is almost reticent to include it as a fingerpost. And yet the more I see life the more I recognise its importance and our failure to prepare ourselves properly.

We are prepared for life in school and university and it is to be hoped within the wonders of a loving developing family. So much seems to be based upon our being the proud successors of parents who were skilled in the arts of being parents that to mention it is unnecessary.

Preparation for life is not however merely a good quality education, often had in pain and suffering. We all remember having to learn by rote all manner of details like mathematical tables and seemingly arcane rules of language of spelling and grammar and the struggle that it was. We remember all those much more complex things that we were expected to regurgitate for the benefit of our examiners in university. All this was the preparation we had to have for lives where our intellects were properly furnished for the greater adventures of living ahead. We were even involved with activities beyond school of sport and culture and simple human good fellowship all of which was to pass on lessons in other dimensions. Some of us even had the benefit of a religious education. All that we learnt was preparation for the great adventures of successful and accomplished living.

But life does require of us that we prepare ourselves as for nothing else. We must be totally open to the experiences that life will offer us and be able to draw all the messages to which those experiences will direct us. Preparation will assist us to be better able to assimilate that experience and to draw effective lessons which we can apply to the further widening of that experience.

Preparation does also have the meaning of planning. We must know where we are going in life whether it be in career or marriage or in any extramural activity. Major undertakings will always involve major planning to the point where it is reported by many professional advisers that the preparation for an exercise is more important than its implementation and performance. Preparation will mean that, if a difficulty

arises or some question appears, the answer has already been thought through and can be easily implemented. The students of military history will tell of the great invasions and the planning that went on before them. It was the planning that made possible the first easy and often huge strides which led to victories one after the other. Every successful launch of a new product by a business will turn on the thought that went into the exercise before it was commenced.

Preparation has no drawbacks though there is one caution. Preparation will make dealing with problems later easier. But it will never be a substitute for proper application. It must not be too rigid – life is not straight lines but easy curves often of unexpected proportions from unexpected quarters. Freedom has its place as usual.

Boy Scouts are told “*Be Prepared.*” No better advice can be given.

INTENSITY

“Live with a passion” is a phrase in the language that we were taught in school. We were not intended to be tentative and cautious: we were intended to grasp life with both hands and feel all its power and challenges. We were to be passionate about it.

Passion is a term that comes from the Latin and connotes heat and love. Intensity of living is no different. It sees and it *feels*. The great victories in life came to those who were deeply committed to a result from the wonders of those who have moved the world by their compassion and feeling for the pain of others (one thinks of the founders of the Salvation Army at this point) or those who had visions of large commercial undertakings. The man who sent railways into so much of the Mid-West of the United States could feel and hear trains: the rattle of steel wheels on steel tracks was in his blood. A great fortune followed him and an inestimable contribution to the development of a part of a continent.

Intensity sees and intensity feels. It responds to the commitment of the heart and the soul and not merely the commitment of the mind. It dreams and dreams and urges forward. The dream takes the dreamer higher and higher. One thinks of the great artists and their remarkable accomplishments and thinks of the struggles that they have had to undergo in order to bring their genius out. But their passion and its intensity meant that they walked over razor blades, so to speak, in order to attain the outpouring of what was in them. They had no alternative. Deep within them was something that they alone knew and had to pursue. Deep within you is some dream, some challenge, some inescapable aim in life that burns and burns and seems so unattainable. Let that dream glow more brightly and pursue it at all costs. You owe yourself no more and no less.

Having decided to pursue your dream, pursue it with an equal passion. Nothing can be allowed to stand in its way. No hurdle (there may be many of them but again the mathematics of just one more is the answer here) can be allowed to limit or restrain. For every hurdle there is some form of solution, some form of response by which that challenge can be defeated or surmounted or even merely avoided.

The dream must be allowed to burn and as you will find each victory, however small, becomes the stepping stone to a larger one.

None of this requires a formal university education. What is required is a simple quality that seems to exist independently of intelligence. Sheer grit. Grit requires that the individual stay with the task and that the goal be pursued (or the goals) with all commitment of mind and heart and soul.

Go forward – with certainty and with courage and with the sense that the victory to which you aspire has already happened. You will find that you are much more able than you have ever dared think and that in meeting your dream you are meeting yourself – *four- square*.

TRANQUILLITY AND SERENITY

We all admire the sporting hero for whom the great moment is a time when he or she seems still able to cope with the needs of the moment for all the pressures upon him. We all know the deep anxiety that can so easily overwhelm us when the adventures of effective and whole living are taking us into areas of experience which are to that moment so foreign or removed. We all know what it is to be nervous about some undertaking, be it a speech, or an artistic performance, or anything (yes, anything) which is asking something from us which is outside the norms of our daily experience.

We also know how dazzled we are by individuals in whom the inner qualities of calm and tranquillity and serenity seem so essentially theirs. We speak so easily of a “Zen serenity” of the man or the woman for whom no disaster or moment of testing is so large as to damage or reduce the quality of individual management. We see the footballer who has the kick to make after the full time whistle upon which the fate of nations will seem to hang. That he can kick the ball straight at all impresses us; that he can still succeed in doing so with total ease and aplomb staggers us. We are in awe of such qualities. And yet we need not be.

The great gift to us of deep inner calm and the capacity to draw on all that is within us at all times and to be unaffected by the pressures of the moment is so readily and lightly accessible. It is available to us in the journey of inner meditation. It is that deep inwards travelling over an extended time of great personal discipline and continuity that will finally give us a quality of inner relaxation and freedom from turmoil that will enable us to march serene and composed into any situation and remain not merely the master of the moment but the master more importantly of ourselves. Meditation, as has already been observed, is a journey of deep inner times of profound relaxation when all that we are seems so richly to be functioning in aid of what we are and what we are seeking to do and accomplish. We can do deep breaths at the moment of crisis (they do help) but the fuller recognition of our inner abilities to manage and succeed will be that we have touched the depth of ourselves and can stay in touch with that depth – and make it a natural part of ourselves.

The victory that will always come as a result is no surprise. We have met our own deepest inner self. We are more than we ever thought and more than we ever thought possible comes through us. We seem like the Rock of Gibraltar – nothing can shake or stir or shock – the waves and the battering will not impinge upon us. We shall rise triumphant over all the pressures and stresses.

The journey to so rich a level of serenity is not easy. It requires time and discipline and effort to have no effort (as usual wisdom is vastly paradoxical). For all that, the man (or the woman) who can take charge of his time and his energies is the one who will come out on top and whose journey of living will touch and inspire others with his own brand of depth. Meditation alone will give the individual that measure of inner strength and resolution. That will mean better management of time and the diary. The truly successful will pursue it and win accordingly. Just stop long enough, often enough and be deeply blessed.

VIGOUR

We all know some individuals who seem to have touched the deepest powerhouse within themselves. They seem at all times able to find that extra capacity to work and to bring about results. They have a quality of simple raw energy about them that is so encouraging and so inspiring. These people move with a joyful harmony and an ease of the interaction of their bodies and minds and all that they are that nothing else seems able to match. Great undertakings lie with them (and within them) and greater results will flow to them.

I have recently read the story of Sir Ernest Shackleton and his extraordinary efforts (successful, indeed) to rescue the members of his failed expedition to Antarctica in the years 1914 to 1916. His traversing the storm-tossed South Atlantic in an open boat from Elephant Island to South Georgia Island in the Antarctic autumn of 1916 to seek rescue for his men (and himself) is a story of courage and personal integrity that perhaps we at the beginning of another century may find hard to understand, certainly to match. And yet his simple raw energy – his totally committed energies to finding solutions - led to the safe rescue of his men and the creation of a legend. At a time indeed when men were dying in their millions on the Western Front (as some of those he saved were themselves to make the supreme sacrifice in Flanders fields), his was still a story of unbridled and unalloyed courage and commitment allied to a startling recognition of absolute realities. I was again moved to the depths of my being as I thought of it here.

For all that it was his simple vigour not merely of body but of heart and mind and above all, perhaps, imagination, that made for an experience of unbridled heroism and character. Vigour is not merely of the body – we can see enough of that without much effort in any sporting activity. Vigour (or better still – endlessly living, outpouring dynamism) is the quality of transcendent clarity of the mind and the heart and the emotions that is the mark of the true champion, the man or woman who can dream a dream or see a vision and who can give up all else in its energetic pursuit.

These people are the ones who make the world turn and they are the ones most often criticised by lesser men for the very reason of the apparent eccentricity of their

commitment. The man or woman of such quality pays no attention to the complaints or criticisms of those mired in the normal and the conventional. He or she moves on and keeps on moving – to the wholeness of living to which he or she aspires.

When next you are tired, when next the journey seems hard and exhausting, remember that the victory is only to the vigorous of heart and mind and body and soul.

Are you big enough – or are you another observer destined to be impressed but rarely to impress?

CONCLUSION

This is a little work aimed at assisting you to grow into the very fullness of all you are. Each of us has a journey of living of unimaginable beauty and of a depth and richness that can make the world turn. So few of us get even close – most of us live as though survival alone were enough. Colour of living and the richness of a deep experience of meeting oneself in all that one is are not easily had. They come to the adventurers who are prepared to go on the journey and to stay with it – at whatever cost and in whatever situation. Their reward is a life of total quality and deep enrichment.

That quality is open to any and to all and it is the work of ***A Gift of Encouragement*** to assist all who would travel that way to do so. The message is one of utter simplicity – the dignity and worth of the individual and the qualities of great happiness and vivid calm to be seen in those who have pursued their own greatness. The journey is not for the faint-hearted and is only for those who can set their fears aside and realise that the time we have been given is precious and limited. Failure to make the most of every moment is a major failure – the Eastern teaching of the *here-now* is so correct. We cannot help you to make the most of your time – we can do nothing for you at any time anyway.

The great Truth from which we should not seek escape is the obligation upon the individual to march alone to his or her own fullness. This is not easy – there are enormous pressures upon individuals not to walk as they may wish. The obligation upon the Great to do so however is so essential that the individual in whom there is *grandeur* (and greatness may have nothing to do with fame or the recognition of men) will walk it alone and with his or her head held high anyway.

We salute those who have the courage and the determination not to waste a moment. The journey is yours and yours alone, but we wish you well. The world needs you to be yourself at all costs and “no matter what.” You will move on assured that the life you have given to the planet was one of true success whatever the history books may say.

Your guide

Maxwell Dodd is a fifth generation Australian who was born in the Hunter Valley in New South Wales in August 1942 at the time of great fears of Japanese invasion. After a traditional, indeed, classical education at the Australian equivalent of a Public School, he qualified as a solicitor and practised in the courts of London and Sydney as the advocate for those who were poor in spirit and of estate. He realised from his dealings with the courts and their customers that his real vocation did not lie in advocacy for all his professional success, but in a wider ministry of personal development and spiritual growth. After spending many years as the carer of his elderly Mother, he has now embarked on his second career as an enlarger of the soul, the traveller and cyclist, and a guide to the great human adventure called Life.

He is a bachelor and, while Sydney is in a sense “home,” his paths regularly take him to the wider world of Britain and Europe.

A Gift of Encouragement is an operation that reflects his vision of the individual’s potential of attaining spiritual and earthly fullness and its purpose has the wider aim of assisting people of all ages and experiences to find balance and much more in their fulfilled lives.