

Experience: Still the best teacher of all

November 2014 Newsletter



When it comes to learning everyday lessons, there's no better teacher than life itself. Books, articles, the internet, TV and other resources are all helpful and informative. They can plant ideas and expand your thinking. But the most impactful life lessons often come from "doing."

Nothing replaces experience

You may know people who've broken a leg, visited a foreign country, had a serious loss, gotten married or divorced, or had a baby. But how about when it actually happens to you?

Listening, thinking and visualizing an event aren't the same as going through it yourself. Hearing someone else's experience can give you a chance to mentally rehearse what you might do. But being center stage and having to react is very different.

Experience teaches you lessons you can't learn any other way. For example, you can learn that:

- **There is no perfect.** The things we enjoy most in life may be great, but they're not necessarily flawless. And that's fine. It's an important wakeup call to learn to accept imperfections and "go with the flow." (Does this speak to the perfectionist in you?)
- **There's almost always a silver lining.** If you look hard enough, you can usually find a positive during a difficult time. For instance, a mistake can help you learn something you didn't know before. A loss may open up avenues to new relationships or opportunities. Instead of feeling hopeless at a bleak time, focus on finding the silver lining that's often just ahead. (Can you remember when you were able to see the silver lining in a tough situation?)

- **You can bounce back.** One of the most critical skills in life is resilience. And you may not even know you have it until you need it! No one travels through life without making mistakes and experiencing setbacks. It's the ability to bounce back that builds — and reinforces — strength and character. (Are there ways you've bounced back in your life so far?)
- **You're not alone.** Everyone travels over rocky ground at times. When you meet with adversity, reach out to others. You'll find they've probably been there too. Share your wisdom and experience and learn from theirs. (Can you think of times you've found strength from knowing others have stood in your shoes?)

Experience teaches you what you want... and don't want

We can only learn so much from the words and warnings of our parents and others. It's our own experiences that make the most lasting impression.

Experiences help us explore and get to know ourselves as individuals. They teach us about our strengths, feelings and thoughts. They help us see options, choose our paths and make us who we are.