



Canada's Life Coach & Mentor presents:

Pressing Your Own Buttons



The Secret of Greatness

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An old proverb declares, "Pilgrims to foreign lands find only what they take with them." In short, what you expect to find, you will find; believing is seeing, not the other way around.

While riding through the New England hills between Salem and Boston, the American poet, James Russell Lowell, didn't speak to his traveling companion. For the moment, Lowell was looking out upon a glorious October day. As he observed the brilliant colors of autumn, he remembered that on that very road Paul Revere made his famous ride into history. Reaching the outskirts of Boston, Lowell, roused from his daydreaming to find his companion, still silent, brooding over financial matters. "He was counting bales and barrels," Lowell lamented, "filling his head with business not knowing that this had been one of those rare days when October holds an art exhibit." Lowell's companion was equally unaware of the fact that he had been passing through scenes made historic because of Revere's courage.

It is a fact that any four artists, copying the same landscape, will each see a different scene. To an idler a river means a fish pool; to a perspiring athlete, a bath; to the entrepreneur, the stream suggests a turbine wheel. Author, Samuel Coleridge thought the bank of his favorite stream "was made to lie down upon," but John Bunyan, seeing the stream through the iron bars of his prison cell, felt the breezes of the Delectable Mountains cool his fevered cheek. Stooping down he wet his parched lips with the waters at the "river of life."

Inattentive hearers learn nothing from Nature. Being otherwise preoccupied anyone can go through life deaf to Her sweetest sounds: blind to the beauty of landscape, mountain, sea, and sky. There is no music in the autumn wind until the listener comes. There is no order or beauty in heavenly bodies until some Herschel wonders at the clockwork precision with which they trace their paths across the evening sky. There is no fragrance in the violet until the lover of flowers bends down to smell their blossoms. You do not have to go to college if you attend to the advice of the great humanitarian William Channing, to "listen to stars and birds, to babes and sages."

Listening to the stars, the great astronomer, Laplace, heard the story of how these heavenly fires may become habitable earths. Listening to birds, zoologist Cuvier heard the song within a seashell and discovered the life history of all things that move upon the earth, swim in her seas, or fly in her air. Listening to babes, the German philosopher-educator, Froeble, the founder of the kindergarten system, discovered the teachableness, trust, and purity of childhood.

Listening to sages such as these, you can acquire the intellectual treasures of the good and great of past ages.



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How you listen to the world determines how you feel about everything in it. Change your mindset and you change your feelings. The secret of greatness is to attend to things as they are, not as you *think* they are, nor as you *wish* them to be. Life is not about feelings. Life is about stopping to look, listen, and see what is really going on. Take time to smell the roses. Then, you will surely see the world quite differently from those who do not.

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