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Life is a learning experience. When I was young I was so confident and positive about what I wanted. I had it all figured out. I was busy creating my life and my future. Honestly, I made a lot of good choices and probably just as many bad ones. In my early thirties I was involved in a traumatic automobile accident. That is when I first had a notion that I might want to take a hard look at my life. But it was not until I was in my forties that I began to search for the meaning of my life. Why am I here? What should I do with my life? What is this all about? At forty-six years old I spent five days in an intensive care unit not knowing my fate. It was facing my mortality that started me on my journey.

I found myself longing to help others so I became a volunteer. My yearning for knowledge led me to LCCC. During my first class my instructor introduced me to the head of the program in order to discuss pursuing a degree. But there was still a void. I needed someone to explain what I was feeling and show me how I should continue. In August of 2008 my friend passed away from a short battle with cancer. That is when I opened the book, "Tuesdays with Morrie" and found that missing piece.

"Once you learn how to die, you learn how to live," states Morrie. Each week on Tuesdays, Mitch Albom would meet with Morrie to discuss another lesson in death and life. I read intently, anticipating what Morrie would say each week. I could not put the book down. I read it in one afternoon. Everything I felt and desired was there amongst the pages. Morrie had put words to how my life was changing after I realized that no one truly knows how long they have here on this beautiful, wonderful earth. Morrie taught me how to get busy becoming a better person.

In regards to the world I learned that when you understand suffering, you feel closer to people who suffer. We should care about other people, deeply, to the point of tears. The most important thing in life is to learn how to give out love and let it come back in.

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We should put a limit on self-pity. Just spend a few tearful minutes and then on with the day. I learned that our culture does not encourage us to ask questions until we face death. Is this all? Is this all I want? Is something missing? We need to ponder these thoughts sooner.

Age is something to embrace because as we grow we learn. Age is not just decay. Live a better life knowing you will die one day. When thinking about death, rely on the teaching of Buddhists. Each day a bird on your shoulder asks you if today is the day and if you are ready and if you are doing all that you need to do. The bird asks if you are being the person you want to be. Most of us walk around half asleep not fully experiencing the world. When you face death all that is stripped away and you focus on essentials. When you realize you are going to die, you see everything differently. You are no longer involved in material things that do not satisfy. You stop taking for granted loving relationships and the universe. You find time to stop and experience nature and its beauty.

There is no foundation upon which people may stand today if it is not the family. If you do not have the support and love and caring and concern from your family, you don't have much at all. Morrie believed that knowing your family will be there watching out for you is like nothing else. No money or fame will give you that feeling.

We need to experience all the emotions and let them penetrate us fully. Engross yourself in the emotion at hand. If you are lonely, cry and feel completely lonely and tell yourself okay, I felt loneliness and I can now set it aside. Learn to feel fully and then let go and move on. Forgive yourself and forgive others. There is no point in being stubborn or vengeful.

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Money or power is not a substitute for tenderness. We place our values on the wrong things and are disillusioned. In order to have a meaningful life devote yourself to loving others, your community around you, and to creating something that gives you purpose and meaning.

For a successful marriage, respect the other person, know how to compromise or talk openly about what goes on between you and have a common set of values in life. If you do not do these things you are going to have trouble with your relationship. The most important value is to believe in the importance of your marriage.

Whites and blacks, Catholics and Protestants, men and women are all alike. We all are born and we all die. If we saw each other in this manner we may be more eager to be one big family in this world. We should care about each other like we should care about our own families. Invest in people.

This is how I want to live my life. I make an effort every day but sometimes falter. I will keep these guidelines close to my heart to remind me of the person I want to be in this world. Morrie has shown me what is truly important in life. I want to share Morrie's lessons with all of you. Can you imagine a world where everyone tried to live by Morrie's teachings?