

Bless Back®

Note to Self Questions for Group Discussion



Chapter Two

Note to Self
Illuminators of Kindness

THE IDEAL — KINDNESS

The ideal the school kids saw in Harry was kindness. He demonstrated this ideal by how he treated the kids, even learning all their names. He showed them his working life and the value he gave to doing a good job, which gave his life meaning. Being a janitor, to Harry, meant more than simply maintaining a building. It meant reaching into the children's lives, and doing so in a way and language they understood. When he gave of himself, the children responded back to him in kind.

THE LOOK BACK

Think back to your childhood years. Was there someone who was kind to you? Who was it and how old were you?

How did that person demonstrate kindness to you?

Describe how being around this person made you feel.

As you look back with adult eyes and from some distance in time, is there an underlying reason as to why this person was a point-of-light for you? If so, what do you think it is?

THE INVITATION

How could you, as an illuminator, show kindness as a worthy ideal?

A BLESSBACK COURSE OF ACTION

If your Illuminator of Kindness were sitting with you right now, what three specific things would you say as to how he or she influenced your life?

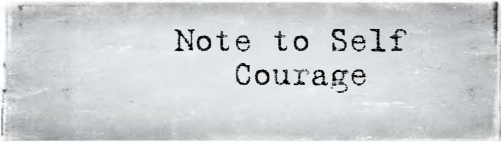
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BENEDICTION

*As I begin my BlessBack journey, may I desire to change,
may I pursue the ideal of kindness as a reason to change.
May I have the courage to change. And, as I receive the tools to aid me,
may I be empowered to act and thank those people
who illuminated my walk through life in a unique way.*



Chapter Three



Note to Self
Courage

THE IDEAL – COURAGE

My dream was the catalyst I needed to start believing in myself again, but courage didn't come overnight. What unleashed me was:

- a realization that I needed to change
- a desire to change
- a conversation with God and a trusted friend surveying the landscape of my past and looking for the positive people there who spoke truth to me

Courage as an ideal requires a conviction to pursue what you believe in. When you come out the other side, you'll look back and see the gained ground and say, "I have something important to give to the world because of the trip."

THE LOOK BACK

In your journey through life so far, who are the people who have been like a coral reef to you, those who, while in their company, make you feel safe from the waves and winds of life? Who allows you to be yourself when you are around them?

Courage is gained in steps. Sometimes those steps are inches long, other times the step might take you off a cliff and into waters below. For the times you've taken a courageous step, from where or from whom did you receive the courage to make a positive change in your life?

Who has shown courage to you by speaking the kind of truth that hurts or stings but turned out to be what you needed to hear?

What was the inciting incident?

What did your Captain Courageous say that allowed you to look at yourself honestly?

How is your life different or better because his or her words or actions spoke truth into your life?

THE INVITATION

If you have personally experienced someone's act of courage toward you, then you know that person risked his relationship with you to do so. He forged ahead and spoke truth into your life because the person cared more about your character than whether the conversation was comfortable or not. Is there someone today who needs to see you being gently courageous before he or she can be? If so, write the person's name and think of how you can tread softly and show that courage is a worthy ideal.

A BLESSBACK COURSE OF ACTION

Even captains in courage appreciate being thanked. How could you give a BlessBack to them and what reasons would you give as to why you are thankful they modeled this ideal to you?

BENEDICTION

*As I revisit my life,
I'm becoming aware how much of it required courage.
As I go forward in my BlessBack journey,
give me the courage to step out or speak up and give a BlessBack.
For I know if I do,
I will have an opportunity to make a difference in someone's life.*



Chapter Four

Note to Self Life Forces

THE IDEAL – LIFE FORCES

Newton's first law of motion is this: An object at rest tends to stay at rest until a force causes the object to move. Applied to this chapter's point, we have discovered that forty percent of our happiness levels are malleable, but to increase those levels, we have to interrupt our status quo, practice, and train our brain.

The same principle applies to another aspect of this law: An object in motion stays in motion until it encounters another force. By using Doc Childre's FREEZE-FRAME or Heart Lock-In methods, we can halt the speed and levels of our stress and bring ourselves into healthier states simply by thinking about someone we appreciate.

Working with these laws of physics in our own situations can only happen if we let these life forces ignite us into action.

THE LOOK BACK

A Quaker woman used to sit quietly for two hours each day. She called the time her "still lessons." Put yourself into a quiet place, right where you are. Concentrate on your heart and still your worries. Close your eyes and take five cleansing breaths, in through your nose, slowly exhaling through your mouth. Now, think about a happy time in your life, one for which you feel grateful. Write down the time in your life and the people in it.

What emotions in the memory do you feel?

How does your body feel after doing this exercise?

THE INVITATION

Our heart is a pump, but even this muscle rests between beats. It uses that time to fill up with blood so at the next beat it is equipped to send its life force where it needs to go. You, too, have the choice each day to fill up your tank; methods like BlessBacks can help you recharge. Habits take thirty-seven days to create. Where in your days this week will you make time to BlessBack, using the still lessons taught in this chapter?

A BLESSBACK COURSE OF ACTION

By using your body's own life forces, along with gratitude, you can exercise control if you use the empowering tools in this chapter. If the people you've thought about are appropriate for you to contact, find their names and addresses and write them below.

As you practice these lifestyle changes, write a list of people you appreciate as you go through the book and practice the skills learned in this chapter each day of this week.

BENEDICTION

*I feel empowered now,
knowing that by using gratitude, my body, mind, and my heart,
I can change my life.
I do want to change
and believe using life forces with gratitude
is an ideal truly worthy of my pursuit.
Today I will still myself and listen to the whispered lessons found there
as I create this new habit of living a happier, grateful life.*



Chapter Five

Note to Self A Directional Pause

THE IDEAL — A DIRECTIONAL PAUSE

Benediction has its roots in *benedicere*, *bene*, meaning well, *dicere*, to speak or speak well of. In the Christian religion, it means to invoke a blessing from God upon another.

In the same way someone speaks a blessing over us, we too, can act and live our lives as a benediction to others. Sheriff Wherry and Marion spoke a benediction of goodness into Gloria and Rick's lives simply by their actions. They were kind, telling the teenagers of the goodness they saw in them; they gave them shelter and food, and invited them into their lives. Most of all, the sheriff and Marion showed the young couple the value in taking a directional pause. It's the same affect the teachers in this chapter evoked when they inspired their students to contemplate their course and reach for their dreams.

THE LOOK BACK

Sometimes we need a harbor, sometimes we need a foghorn, sometimes we need a salty old dog to show us how we've strayed, give us a course correction, or to help us find normal.

If you look for parallels between Gloria and Rick's story and your own, where do you find commonality?

Was there a time you discovered you'd set course in the wrong direction?

Was it circumstances, your choices, or some of each that caused you to stray?

Who presented a directional pause and how did he or she help you correct your course or speak, through actions, a benediction over you?

THE INVITATION

“Golden” is used a lot in our country. Photographers use “the golden hour” to describe the first and last hours when the horizons are at their lustrous best. We use it to describe opportunities, a triangle, a ratio, silence, a state, dogs, beer, anniversaries, and birthdays, to name a few.

Most of us are familiar with the Bible’s golden rule: “Do to others what you would want them to do to you.” The golden rule isn’t about a governing sense of rule; rather, it’s a way of life. It’s an ethical code that asks you to not make yourself an exception to the rule but to treat others in the same way you desire. The result is we build up one another.

A BLESSBACK COURSE OF ACTION

Who are the top three people in your life you would call “a golden person”? If they used the golden rule as a standard, how so?

How have you taken the ways they lived the golden rule and applied it to your life?

Go to your calendar and designate a day in each of the next three months and write on the date, “Thank my Golden Person today.”

BENEDICTION

*Help me to be present in each moment.
For I want to be conscious of each day’s golden hours,
to treat others as I want to be treated.
May I be a candle to someone who has lost the way,
a hand to guide, a shoulder for another to stand on,
mindful always of the golden people in my life.*



Chapter Six

Note to Self Living Within Your Harvest

THE IDEAL — LIVING WITHIN YOUR HARVEST

Most of us associate *harvest* with gathering food from the land, but the ideal of living within your harvest is one that asks us to actually breathe, thrive, invest time interacting and connecting with those whom we come in contact every day. Living within your harvest means expressing compassionate love and concern for our fellow humans in the communities in which we live.

THE LOOK BACK

Describe an altruistic act you either witnessed or of which you were a part.

Why do you think this act has stayed in your memory? What was it that moved you?

THE INVITATION

When is the last time you recognized yourself giving?

Did it cause anyone else to also give?

Where was the place, your state of mind and time in your life that this occurred?

A BLESSBACK COURSE OF ACTION

What company, employee, news reporter, columnist, author or person of influence who has exhibited altruism would you thank if you had five minutes to do so?

Why do you want to thank them?

Will you write a BlessBack to that person, company, or organization?

BENEDICTION

*It's easy to stay on my own plot of land,
but I know connecting means being relational.
Help me to BlessBack within my harvest.
Help me to see beauty in the ashes,
the heroes and she-roes in the dailies of life,
and to offer a spade of good words or actions their way.
I want to be a person of "because."*



Chapter Seven

Note to Self Conspiracy of Goodness

THE IDEAL — CONSPIRACY OF GOODNESS

The conspiracy of goodness ideal is an intentional mindset in which to live, meant to fulfill another's need with gratitude. It's living each day honoring the humanity of another. It's doing goodness, for goodness' sake. It's about "safeguarding our self-respect," as Christian Algreen-Petersen said earlier. It's painting rooms and mending fences. "What kind of world do you want," penned Ben Harper of Ben Folds Five. "History starts now."

THE LOOK BACK

At different times, we serve different roles. We may be teaching a class one day and sitting listening the next. As you read Viktor Frankl's story of little hopes, were you standing with Frankl, echoing his words or were you internalizing his message and letting him speak hope, as the prisoners were, to you, too?

What are the little hopes you think of from your past? That you have for your future?

THE INVITATION

If you read the comments section of online news articles, you know the political climate in the United States seems filled with anger and tension. How can you be a part of a climate change that has to do with the atmosphere of Earth's residents?

If "Huguenots" and "Jews" was replaced with say, Democrats, Republicans, Socialists, Christians, Muslims or Hindus, would you open your door and take them in if they were in need?

Do you know someone who has a different view than you do that causes tension in your interactions?

What could you give him or her that would deflate that tension?

A BLESSBACK COURSE OF ACTION

The Barney cards passed around the dinner table in West Virginia were in fact daily BlessBacks. Their intent was to remind us that in order to eat, one had to first look for and find goodness in others and then thank them for it.

Before you eat your next meal, on two index-sized cards, give a Barney thank-you to two people for what they did today. The thanks need only be one sentence long, but the cards must each state why *today* you are thankful for the person. Deliver the note, whether you place it on someone's desk or send it inter-office mail, use your mail carrier, or hand it to a stranger as you walk by. Whether you stay anonymous or you let yourself be known is up to you.

BlessBack Barneys. Go, change the world as only you can do.

BENEDICTION

Help me see where I need to thank those who have repaired my fences.

*May I act today
to inflate and deflate, as needed,
and if necessary, to use a BlessBack Barney
to live in a conspiracy of goodness.*

*Help me use my gratitude
to create the world I wish to see.*



Chapter Eight: Coastliners

Note to Self Coastliners

THE IDEAL — COASTLINERS

In this chapter, we have learned how we can damage each other with words and actions. We have learned how insincere gratitude and counting the gratitude score keeps us from the blessings found in giving and receiving BlessBacks.

THE LOOK BACK

Who is someone from your past who fits into the category of being a negative coastliner to you and why?

THE INVITATION

An examined life reveals your intentions, your missed opportunities, your course corrections and what you consider worthy of your time and effort to pursue. For this *Note to Self*, examine both kinds of coastliners in your life. What have they taught you about determination, resilience, surrender, boundaries?

A BLESSBACK COURSE OF ACTION

On vacation on Cadillac Mountain in Maine's spectacular Acadia National Park, Rick and I came upon cairns, little stacks of stones, which marked otherwise invisible trail paths on the giant boulders. They showed the way from where we'd come to where we were headed.

Last spring I created a timeline of my life. By the time I finished my life's contents, I had four sheets of paper taped together. The obvious cairns came first, family, marriage, children. But then I started to fill in the space between the markers with moments that mattered just to me and the people —

teachers, friends, relatives, kids, and those whom I call “freighbors,” all played a part in my journey. Creating a timeline forced me to look at the pivotal moments, the times I stepped back, and the restarts that helped me walk toward my dreams and goals. I fashioned this timeline to spotlight the pivotal moments in my mental, spiritual and physical life. I discovered some of my stops were merely rests and at the lowest points, God came closest and I grew the most spiritually.

Take a blank piece of paper and create a timeline. Put today’s date and work backward. You don’t have to use a straight line. You can shape it any way you like, whether you start in the center and work outward in rings or shape it like a snake with hills and valleys.

Mark the places where you have intentionally pulled away from someone who expressed gratitude to you. What were your reasons? Were they valid?

If not, how can you begin to embrace giving and receiving BlessBacks from those who are sincere?

Put the good times down and the times when life was hard on your timeline. What did you truly consider worthy of your time and effort to pursue, all of which made you the beautiful *you* you are today? When you have finished your project, step back and look for the times where you changed the most, based on the “cairns” who pointed the way. Write down their names here.

BENEDICTION

*Guide me to the people who are coastliners I can trust.
As I have looked back over my life,
I realize just how significant people are to my own journey through life.
Some have only stayed for a year or two;
some have been with me since I was born.
Help me honor them in a way that reflects their impact
and my gratitude for their influence.*

