Key appointments

The key to happiness

Reg Garters

Wilfred Jarvis, the renowned Australian behavioural scientist, has been a great friend and mentor for more than 30 years. In his mid-80s, he seems to never lose any of his energy, drive or inquisitiveness. I find it inspiring to chat with Wilf because while he talks about so many universal truths that transcend time, he is always current in his outlook and links these truths to what's happening today.

I guess all of us are looking for the secret to a long and happy life. I asked Wilf if he had come to any conclusions about the subject and factors which he reckoned held the key. I figured here was a man who seemed to have found the key himself and a man who has researched more leaders and organisations in New Zealand and Australia than anyone who's lived — he ought to have picked up a few ideas. In his own humble way he told me about a list of 10 items he had built over many years. .

The 10 Cs are:-

Compassion: Demonstrating active empathy in all encounters with other people. Seeing the world through their eyes and understanding how it feels to be them. Never using your own status and power to degrade or humiliate them or make them helpless victims. Refusing to treat them as objects to be manipulated and exploited. Showing courtesy and consideration. Blending strength with gentleness. Achieving and sustaining a reputation for loyalty to the Golden Rule. Constantly striving more to understand than to be understood; to love rather than be loved. Forgiving others and self for past shortcomings.

Companionship: Establishing and nurturing close, serene relationships. Giving and receiving love and understanding spontaneously and comfortably. Listening and hearing. Awarding much higher priorities to people than to status and things. Demonstrating trustworthiness and loyalty. Sharing the truth about own thoughts and feelings with close friends. Earning and giving respect in all relationships.

Causes: Focusing on priorities and goals outside oneself. Seeking and finding meanings and purposes in daily activities. Having religious and/or philosophical beliefs that give balance and direction and provide support during stressful experiences. Feeling and demonstrating reverence for life. Accepting moral and ethical obligations to people, animals and the environment. Vindicating own existence through willing service for others. Co-operating with them in striving towards shared goals.

Control: Controlling own reactions to experiences, when unable to control those experiences. Striving to be a victor, not a victim. Acknowledging full responsibility for own values, emotions, motivations and actions. Managing stress resiliently. Rarely surrendering to boredom, apathy, anger, cynicism, futility, depression or despair. Constantly practising habits to improve own personal and professional skills. Accurately evaluating own strengths and weakness. Willingly abandoning independence when help from others is needed. Staying in the black when others are in the red.

Candour: Speaking the truth and welcoming the truth. Demonstrating impartiality. Searching for reliable evidence. Avoiding defensiveness. Being open to new ideas. Acknowledging own shortcomings.

Curiosity: Being childlike without being childish. Maintaining active interests in things, people and ideas. Experiencing delight in simple things. Enjoying new knowledge while cherishing permanent truths.

Congruence: Achieving symmetry, balance and wholeness. Blending all aspects of life into coherent, harmonious patterns. Resolving conflicts as rapidly as possible. Living at peace with oneself and with others. Learning from experience. Accepting the inevitability of mistakes but refusing to repeat them.

Commitment: Aiming for worthwhile goals that demand perseverance, faith and courage. Planning greater achievements in the future than were recorded in the past and endeavouring to transform those visions into accomplishments. Handling the repetitive, unavoidable routines of life cheerfully. Seeking new solutions to old problems. Dreaming and doing.

Persevering against frustrations. Adapting to unchangeable adversities and disappointments. Being recognised as a positive, creative, optimistic person.

Continuity:

Examining, accepting and guiding own life by dependable, enduring values. Avoiding the seductions of gimmicks, flavours of the month, temporariness, superficiality and mediocrity. Being constant in allegiance to high-priority values, goals, responsibilities and relationships.

Competence: Believing in the purposes of life and experiencing it as a welcome journey. Maintaining high job task efficiency with all assignments. Setting and achieving difficult goals. Transforming visions into accomplishments.

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