



## DC TUTORING & MENTORING INITIATIVE



# CIVIC LEADERSHIP

*Organizing our lives and developing the habits of mind and heart to build a better world*

## Civic Leadership: The Big Picture

*The future is not a gift: it is an achievement. Every generation helps make its own future. This is the essential challenge of the present.*  
– Robert. F. Kennedy

*Just as only light drives out darkness, only love drives out hate.* - Martin Luther King

Good leaders build trust, build for the long-term, and build a "we're all in it together" mindset because they feel a deep sense of responsibility. From sports teams to businesses, military units to orchestras, classrooms to politics, families to neighborhoods, we know that good leadership makes a difference. In the best teams, small groups, and organizations, everyone feels and takes responsibility for the greater good, regardless of whether they have "leadership" in their formal job description.

But not enough people today are stepping up to take responsibility for the greater good in their communities or for the health of the nation. That's part of the problem we are trying to fix with the DC Tutoring & Mentoring Initiative and that we believe underlies issues large and small that we all care about.

Our goal is to transform education in the District **AND** to demonstrate the impact of a thoughtful, strategic, and long-term approach to creating a community where we all treat each other, as Robert F. Kennedy put it, "with love and wisdom, and compassion for one another, and with a sense of justice for those who still suffer in this country."

We see from the Civil Rights Movement how a small number of people with vision and "burning patience" built a movement that altered the course of American history. And we see how the gay marriage equality movement slowly but surely changed public opinion and policy by a combi-

nation of one-on-one conversations and other strategies. Now it's time to do the same for education, poverty and inequality.

It starts with the small interactions and "civic conversations" that our volunteer canvassing teams have with the people they meet. It continues with the bonds that develop between volunteer tutors and their students. And it can expand to give all Americans renewed confidence that we can work together to solve our major challenges with the help of people from all walks of life.

We are looking for a cadre of "**practical idealists**" who:

- Share our gut feeling that we are here for a purpose and that purpose is connected to making a better world.
- Feel a sense of urgency to close "the growing gap between our scientific and moral progress." (Martin Luther King)
- Feel a sense of camaraderie with all people and can convey that feeling through warm interactions with them.

What legacy do you want to leave? Whether you are shy or outgoing, super-busy or with time on your hands, politically engaged or watching from the sidelines, we hope you will join us in the hard but all-important work of building a strong foundation for a vibrant, supportive and sustainable community and nation for the 21st Century.

### Two Mutually Reinforcing Goals



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## Civic Leadership: Core Principles

**Leadership and wisdom matter, especially today in our civic life — and they can be systematically developed through daily or regular “practice.”** They are hard to define and measure but we usually know them when we see them, like a coach evaluating an athlete not only on his or her time on a 40-yard dash but on his or her “heart.” We need “leadership that takes responsibility without waiting for revelation or request [and regardless of formal role]... One may lead perhaps with no more than a question in hand.” (Heifetz, Leadership Without Easy Answers)

**Transformative change is possible.** Imagine how many people in 1890 said something like, “If man were meant to fly, he would have had wings.” It’s easy to take a stick-in-the-mud attitude about positive change but, as Nelson Mandela put it, “People say it’s impossible until it’s done.” Or as President Obama said at his 2009 inauguration, “We remain a young nation, but in the words of scripture, the time has come to set aside childish things...[We sometimes forget] what free men and women can achieve when imagination is joined to common purpose, and necessity to courage.”

**Political and technological changes alone aren’t sufficient.** Technology is a double-edged sword that gets used for good and evil; government policies too often have unintended consequences and invite backlash. Let’s build a stronger foundation: “[T]he salvation of this human world lies nowhere else than in the human heart, in the human power to reflect, in human meekness and in human responsibility.” (Vaclav Havel, Czech dissident and president)

**We need to keep a long-term vision of what is possible because this work will take time.** “The world can only be changed by those with burning patience.” (Peruvian proverb) Whether one is changing public opinion or building a new airplane, it takes a great deal of time. The foundation for the success of the Civil Rights Movement in the ‘50s and ‘60s was laid over many decades by early civil rights leaders. The gay marriage equality movement, too, took many years of strategic organizing and weathered substantial failures as well as successes along the way to its 2015 victory. To expand on UCLA coach John Wooden, “Success is never final, failure is never fatal. It’s courage [and persistence] that count.”

**We are connected in a wider circle of fellowship, kindness, compassion.** We are all on the same team, even if some of our teammates don’t know it — in which case, we need to remind them. We are tied together in ways we can only dimly intuit. As Lincoln put it in a different context, “I am loath to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield, and patriot grave, to every living heart and hearthstone, all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.”

**Civic faith.** Let’s focus on our shared faith. We need to build on existing organizations and institutions, including both religious congregations and secular organizations. I hope we can agree with Eleanor Roosevelt that, at its core, religion “is simply the conviction that all human beings must hold some belief in a power greater than themselves, and that whatever their religious belief may be, it must move them to live better in this world and to approach whatever the future holds with serenity.”

Or, to quote Havel again, “The world we live in is made of an immensely complex and mysterious tissue about which we know very little and which we must treat with utmost humility... Hope is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out.”

**“Only through the bringing together of head and heart— intelligence and goodness — shall man rise to a fulfillment of his true nature.”** (Martin Luther King) We must understand the big picture and be strategically and tactically smart while listening to our heart and deeper intuitions.

Interested in learning more? Go to <http://civicLeadershipProject.org> and especially the readings under “Documents”, “[Civic Leadership Program Syllabus \(2016\)](#)” or email us at [info@dcTutorMentor.org](mailto:info@dcTutorMentor.org).

# Civic Leadership: Begin with Ourselves

By Tom Pollak, Director, DCTMI

*[The] most important lesson I have learned in the fifty years I have spent working toward the building of a better world is that the true work of social transformation starts within... We must be the change we seek if we are to effectively demand transformation from others. - John Lewis (Congressman, Freedom Rider, Civil Rights Movement leader)*

*The consciousness of belonging, vitally, to something beyond individuality; of being part of a personality that reaches we know not where, in space and time, greatens the heart to the limit of the soul's ideal, and builds out the supreme of character. - Joshua Chamberlain (Gettysburg leader)*

We believe that volunteer and civic leaders — and probably all human beings — will be wiser, more courageous, more creative, more effective, more empathetic, happier and just plain better people if they can find time in their lives for solitude, physical exercise and spending time in the outdoors. For some people in some roles, perhaps, the difference is hard to see but if you are in a role that requires authentic interaction with people, wise decision-making, or creativity— like the work we hope you will do with us! — then these practices can make a world of difference.

At home and at work, we face innumerable distractions and the allure of short-term projects, which may give us kudos from our bosses and a nice sense of accomplishment but that distract us from the larger role we can play in our world. Besides re-

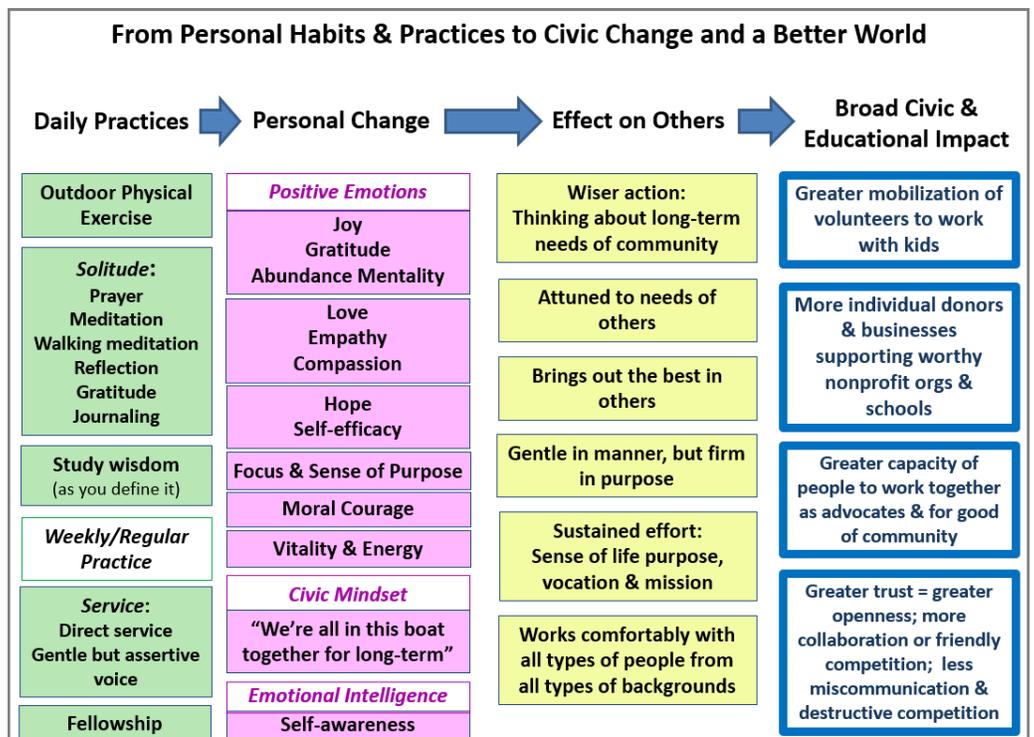
cruiting a cadre of practical idealists, we believe it's important to help them develop the focus and the “burning patience,” as well as the individual skills and mindset we need to work together as a team over the long-term. There is ample evidence from numerous studies that these or similar practices are of value. (See our website for details.) We hope that you will consider adopting a set of daily practices that works for you if you don't have some already.

The chart below summarizes our “theory of change” from daily individual practices through social or civic change. The remainder of this section focuses on some of the aspects for our personal development. (Our broader institutional theory of change can be found elsewhere.)

## How Do We Learn? Daily Practice

We can benefit from a daily practice to keep us centered and better able to brace ourselves to have the courage and tenacity to do what needs

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to be done in the world and to act from “the better angels of our [own] nature.”

How? Ask any serious musician, competitive athlete or coach: “Practice every day. Practice on your vacation and on your days off... That’s how you will succeed and become great!” We may all have narrowly defined roles at work and in other aspects of our lives but daily physical, mental and spiritual practice serves a purpose much like a runner’s daily run, a soccer player’s thousand daily touches on the ball or a basketball player’s 500 free throws each day: It’s the foundation for success as an individual and for a team. So start your day with “alone time” and physical exercise. Repeat. ***You will create an upward spiral of wisdom and positive emotion that will have a positive effect on those around you, and which, in turn, will make it easier for you to grow.*** And as we better understand this in our personal lives, we are better able to make a difference for others — whether it’s as a tutor or mentor or as an advocate on climate change or some other issue.

### ***Daily Solitude or Alone-Time***

Think again about a coach’s role: He or she helps keep the team focused on the long-term, on what is important, and not just on what is urgent or grabs our emotions. A daily practice of solitude — whether prayer, meditation, reflection, journaling or study — serves a similar purpose: It helps us in a range of ways that both benefit us as individuals and help us be more effective as tutors, mentors and in our community leadership work. How valuable is it? Nelson Mandela said, “One of the things that made me long to be back in prison was that I had so little opportunity for reading, thinking and quiet reflection after my release. “

Some of my Christian friends spend a half hour each morning in a “daily devotional” reflecting on Bible passages supplied by Our Daily Bread. Other secular friends practice daily “breath meditation.” (See UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center at [\[marc.ucla.edu\]\(http://marc.ucla.edu\).\)](http://</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

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*Who can decide what is better, to live or to understand life? We must do both alternately, and a man can no more limit himself to either than a pair of scissors can cut with a single one of its blades.*

*- William James American philosopher/psychologist*

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Me? I often reflect on (and sometimes memorize and recite) passages from speeches or books to remind myself that there are alternative ways to think about “the good life” and “the good community,” which may not be in fashion today but which have stood the test of time.

***Positive emotions.*** Numerous studies have found that our positive emotions — our sense of compas-



sion, empathy, trust, joy, etc. — are strengthened when we take time each day for meditation (and perhaps other types of solitude as well).

As Anne Morrow Lindbergh put it, “When one is a stranger to oneself then one is estranged from others too. If one is out of touch with oneself, then one cannot touch others. How often, in a large city, shaking hands with my friends, I have felt the wilderness stretching between us... And for me, the inner spring, can best be found through solitude.”

***Self-awareness and wisdom.*** It gives us time to understand our feelings, and the experiences that triggered those feelings; it helps us find ways that meet our basic needs to feel related to others and to a broader purpose, to feel a sense of independence and competence.

***Creativity and problem solving.*** Einstein summarized the process concisely: “I think 99 times and  
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find nothing. I stop thinking, swim in silence, and the truth comes to me.” Research on the impact of meditation confirms his experience.

**Focus, discipline and courage.** In his talk to West Point cadets on *Solitude and Leadership*, Bill Deresiewicz said, “Solitude is the very essence of leadership. The position of the leader is ultimately an intensely solitary, even intensely lonely one. However many people you may consult, you are the one who has to make the hard decisions. And at such moments, all you really have is yourself.”

### **Daily Physical Exercise**

Literally hundreds of scientific studies have documented the benefits of physical exercise for both mental and physical well-being. Numerous studies have shown that exercise generates endorphins, improves mood and helps fight depression; it reduces anxiety; it buffers the brain from “social defeat” and adversity; and it helps create an “abundance mentality.”

Personally, I find nothing I do increases my sense of being able to push through whatever challenges or adversity I face (self-efficacy), and leads to creative problem solving (for both technical and interpersonal challenges) like my 45-minute bike rides to and from work each day. I think of it as both my meditation and my exercise rolled into one. Some Eastern meditation traditions include “walking meditation”; I think of this as bike meditation.:)

Create your own daily practice consistent with your beliefs and better instincts. Try it for a while, and see what works for you — and then stick with it.

### **Get Outside Every Day**

I bike to work almost every day, rain or shine, heat or cold. I am reminded every day that, as Lincoln said, “The Almighty has His own purposes” and that I am part of something much bigger than myself or the people with whom I interact. It’s a vast world out there; whether we are con-

scious of it or not, the weather, the seasons, and the landscape all affect us in good ways and bad and that helps us to remember to be humble in the face of this immense unknown.

### **Organize Your Life & Make Time for What's Important**

*What is important is seldom urgent, and what is urgent is seldom important.*  
- Pres. Dwight Eisenhower

We are all busy. But we often have more options than we recognize in both the short-term and the long:

1. Turn off the TV and put down the smart-phone, tablets and laptops, especially when they are being used for mindless entertainment. People who volunteer in the U.S. (26% of the public) spend an hour less time every day watching TV than other people.
2. Keep your expenses down so you don’t feel compelled to take the high-stress or unfulfilling job that requires impossibly long hours. (Only one-third of Americans consider themselves “engaged” with their jobs, according to Gallup.)
3. Work with your spouse or partner to give each other time for solitude, exercise and civic leadership. Perhaps this means that one of you stays home to focus on family and community, works reduced hours, or takes the job that pays less but has a direct impact on making a better world.
4. Focus your study (reading, TED Talks or thought-provoking videos) on what’s important, too, whether fiction or nonfiction.

Martin Luther King said, “Make a career of humanity...You will make a greater person of yourself, a greater nation of your country, and a finer world to live in.” We hope this pamphlet helps you organize your life to “make a career of humanity” (MLK) — or at least make part-time civic leadership a meaningful part of your life.

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## Develop Your Own Daily Practice: A Few Quotes to Get You Started

*Pick a quote, thought, prayer or meditation from the list below, from earlier in this pamphlet, or from your own sources. Read it silently or out loud when you wake up in the morning, exercise, or to center yourself during the day.*

### ***Civic Vision, Purpose & Possibilities***

With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations. - Abraham Lincoln (2nd Inaugural Address)

We must work passionately and indefatigably to bridge the gulf between our scientific progress and our moral progress. - Martin Luther King, Jr.

The difference between what we do and what we are capable of doing would suffice to solve most of the world's problems. —Mahatma Gandhi

The future is not a gift: it is an achievement. Every generation helps make its own future. This is the essential challenge of the present. – Robert. F. Kennedy

Never believe that a few caring people can't change the world. For, indeed, that's all who ever have. - Margaret Mead

The inspiration of a noble cause involving human interests wide and far, enables men to do things they did not dream themselves capable of before, and which they were not capable of alone. The consciousness of belonging, vitally, to something beyond individuality; of being part of a personality that reaches we know not where, in space and time, greatens the heart to the limit of the souls ideal, and builds out the supreme of character.—Joshua Chamberlain (Battle of Gettysburg hero)

### ***The Moral and Spiritual Dimension***

The arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice. - Martin Luther King

You are not a human being in search of a spiritual experience. You are a spiritual being immersed in a human experience. - Teilhard de Chardin

Every man lives in two realms, the internal and the external... So much of modern life can be summarized in that suggestive phrase from Thoreau: 'Improved means to an unimproved end.' - Martin Luther King

### ***Courage, Compassion and Creativity***

There is no passion to be found in playing small -- in settling for a life that is less than the one you are capable of living. - Nelson Mandela

I think about [Martin Luther King] with the three C's: courage, compassion and creativity. And I think that the stoking of our creative capacities is one of the jobs that is still necessary for us... We are absolutely amateurs at this matter of building a democratic nation made up of many, many peoples, of many kinds, from many connections and convictions and from many experiences.— Vincent Harding (colleague of Martin Luther King)

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference. - Robert Frost

### ***Civic Wisdom***

"Aeschylus wrote: In our sleep, pain which cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart until, in our despair, against our will, comes wisdom through the awful grace of God. What we need in the United States is not division; what we need in the United States is not hatred; what we need in the United States is not violence or lawlessness; but love and wisdom, and compassion toward one another, and a feeling of justice toward those who still suffer within our country, whether they be white or they be black. Let us dedicate ourselves to what the Greeks wrote so many years ago: to tame the savageness of man and make gentle the life of the world." - Robert F. Kennedy, On the Assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. 1968.

A mature person is one who does not think only in absolutes, who is able to be objective even when deeply stirred emotionally, who has learned that there is both good and bad in all people and in all things, and who walks humbly and deals charitably with the circumstances of life, knowing that in this world no one is all knowing and therefore all of us need both love and charity. — Eleanor Roosevelt

### ***Civic Fellowship***

We must delight in each other, make others conditions our own, rejoice together, mourn together, labor and suffer together, always having before our eyes our community as

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members of the same body. - John Winthrop, aboard the Arabella (1630)

We can perhaps remember, even if only for a time, that those who live with us are our brothers; that they share with us the same short moment of life; that they seek, as we do, nothing but the chance to live out their lives in purpose and happiness, winning what satisfaction and fulfillment they can.

Surely this bond of common faith, this bond of common goal, can begin to teach us something. Surely, we can learn, at least, to look at those around us as fellow men. And surely we can begin to work a little harder to bind up the wounds among us and to become in our own hearts brothers and countrymen once again. - Robert F. Kennedy, April 5, 1968

### ***Imagine the Difference We Can Make!***

Communities and nonprofits need more volunteers or people willing to forego financial wealth for the chance to have an impact in the world. Blue Engine in New York, for example, puts five recent college graduates in each classroom along with a seasoned teacher to provide small group instruction in a few struggling schools with dramatic results. Imagine if communities could tap retirees, college students, and workers with flexible schedules to do the same in every school. - DCTMI

### ***Transformation and Tipping Points***

To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete. - Buckminster Fuller

The world is changing and sometimes in sudden and unexpected ways. "Upward and downward spirals." "Systems." These are common concepts in science that capture the fact that change does NOT always happen in a simple linear way. - DCTMI

The tipping point is that magic moment when an idea, trend, or social behavior crosses a threshold, tips, and spreads like wildfire..

"There is a simple way to package information that, under the right circumstances, can make it irresistible. All you have to do is find it..

If you want to bring a fundamental change in people's belief and behavior...you need to create a community around them, where those new beliefs can be practiced and expressed and nurtured. - Malcolm Gladwell (*The Tipping Point*)

People in Utah volunteer twice the number of hours of people in the rest of the country. Their motivation is religious but the fact that they can make the time in their lives shows us that we can, too. The question remains:

How? We think our approach may be the answer...but time — and our efforts — will tell.

### ***Understanding Problems & Testing Solutions***

There are a thousand hacking at the branches of evil to one who is striking at the root. - Henry David Thoreau

Besides strengthening education, our goal is to create a civic culture that America ought to have. The problems get lumped under a number of descriptions: A culture of "business", "a culture of indifference" (Pope Francis), narcissism, consumerism, neuroticism, anxiety and fear, depression (mental), civic immaturity, etc. It may be impossible to agree on the causes — but that doesn't mean we can't solve the problem, much like doctors can cure cancer even though the cause is seldom understood for a specific individual.—DCTMI

### ***Civic Faith and Hope***

Hope is the "belief in the plausibility of the possible as opposed to the necessity of the probable." - Maimonides (12th century Jewish philosopher quoted by Marshall Ganz)

Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase. - Martin Luther King, Jr.

But I have faith... Without it no action would be possible. And action is the only remedy to indifference, the most insidious danger of all... There is so much to be done, there is so much that can be done. One person — a Raoul Wallenberg, an Albert Schweitzer, Martin Luther King, Jr. — one person of integrity, can make a difference, a difference of life and death. As long as one dissident is in prison, our freedom will not be true. As long as one child is hungry, our life will be filled with anguish and shame. What all these victims need above all is to know that they are not alone; that we are not forgetting them, that when their voices are stifled we shall lend them ours, that while their freedom depends on ours, the quality of our freedom depends on theirs. - Elie Wiesel (concentration camp survivor and author, Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech)

Surely, in the light of history, it is more intelligent to hope rather than to fear, to try rather than not to try. For one thing we know beyond all doubt: Nothing has ever been achieved by the person who says, 'It can't be done.'  
- Eleanor Roosevelt

### ***Responsibility***

[We] have a moral responsibility to be intelligent.  
- Martin Luther King, Jr.

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It isn't enough to talk about peace. One must believe in it. And it isn't enough to believe in it. One must work at it.  
- Eleanor Roosevelt

When an individual is no longer a true participant, when he no longer feels a sense of responsibility to his society, the content of democracy is emptied. - Martin Luther King

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel said, "some are guilty, but all are responsible." We are all responsible. That responsibility begins with our own community, but can't stop until it washes over the whole of humanity. And... "When you spend your life condemning, there is little time to offer something constructive." ... Is all morality gone? I refuse to believe it is. As long as there are those left willing to connect their own suffering to the suffering of others, who see their own humanity mingling with the humanity of others, who are willing to perpetually expand their circle of concern to encompass all of us, there is hope for us yet. - Omid Safi (Director, Duke Islamic Studies Center)

### ***Civic Leadership: Creating an "Upward Spiral" of Connection, Creativity, and Kindness***

You never really understand another person until you consider things from his point of view - until you climb inside of his skin and walk around in it.  
- Harper Lee, *To Kill A Mockingbird*

"Kids should pull themselves up by their bootstraps" is the mindset they come in with. But after working as mentors and tutors, they've become advocates for investing in schools. "I've learned more than the kids," they'll say. "I'd heard these stories before but it's different hearing them firsthand." - Sarah J. Read, Missouri civic organizer

[Our democratic institutions] must be inhabited by citizens and citizen leaders who know how to hold conflict inwardly in a manner that converts it into creativity, allowing it to pull them open to new ideas, new courses of action, and each other... We regard "tension" as a condition to be relieved, not an energy to hold in our hearts... That is good advice if our stress comes from a toxic workplace, an abusive relationship, or some other assault on body or soul. But the stress that comes from being stretched by alien ideas, values, and experiences is of a different sort. This is why some psychologists distinguish between distress (which is negative and destructive), and eustress (which is positive and a prod to growth). It is important to know the difference. Positive stress may try our patience, and yet it can help our hearts become more spacious and generous. - Parker Palmer, *Healing the Heart of Democracy*

We must continue the work of community building in school, congregation, neighborhood, workplace. It's not

just that we shall be building communities. We shall be developing citizens who know out of their own intimate experience the disciplines and satisfactions of community. They will understand teamwork, the observance of shared values, collaborative problem solving and the building of trust.

We have major tasks ahead... The loss of civic faith is an obstacle... [T]he government (and other powerful institutions) will not become worthy of trust until citizens take positive action to hold it to account. Citizen involvement comes first... It is not a liberal or conservative issue... It is a question of whether we are going to settle into a permanent state of alienated self-absorption or show the vigor and purpose that becomes us. We do not want it said that after a couple of great centuries we let the American Experiment disintegrate. - John W. Gardner (founder of Common Cause & other organizations), *Living, Leading, and the American Dream*

### ***Keeping Things Simple***

Practically speaking, a life that is vowed to simplicity, appropriate boldness, good humor, gratitude, unstinting work and play, and lots of walking brings us close to the actual existing world and its wholeness. - Gary Snyder

The athlete, in order to win his contest, strips off the non-essentials of clothing, is careful of what he eats, simplifies his life in a number of ways. Great achievements of the mind, of the imagination, and of the will also require similar discriminations and disciplines... By a life of great simplicity over a long period of time the leader demonstrates his unselfishness and sincerity,—two elements which tend to generate and maintain trust... By sharing to that extent in the circumstances of the great majority of people the leader keeps aware of their problems and keeps rapport with them. By so acting he identifies them with himself, as well as himself with them, thus encouraging them to feel that they too, despite small material means, may become significant in the life of the community or nation... If an entire ruling group or intelligentsia were always to live simply, the moral unity, self-respect and endurance of the entire nation would be enhanced. - Richard Gregg, *The Power of Voluntary Simplicity* (1936)

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