



In Bounds: Desired Things

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One childhood Christmas, four identical sized packages, adorned in gay wrapping and ribbons, awaited my siblings and me under a tree sharp with glitter and bright with lights. It was the year we received as a family a ten foot toboggan, my brothers each a desk for their bedrooms, a pair of skis for my sister and the game Battle Ship for me.

All in all a good haul, but the very best gift, a life long lesson in self preservation for within the seasonally dressed boxes my father had given each of us a framed copy of the Desiderata. This profound piece of wisdom by Max Ehrmann has carried me through many tough and puzzling times. Two copies keep me company, one at home and one in my office, for quick reflection.

Merry Christmas to each of you and good health and happiness in the year ahead to you and your families.

(Editor's Note: Max Ehrmann was an attorney-turned-philosopher-poet who lived in Terre Haute, Ind. He spent his life wrestling with the realities of making a living and following his personal calling to a life of poetry, literature and thought. He wrote A Prayer, which became a message of hope for thousands, but he is best known for Desiderata, which he wrote for himself, "because it counsels those virtues I felt myself most in need of." Max included this work as part of a personal Christmas greeting in 1933, and Desiderata's power and appeal have continued to reach out to and significantly affect readers ever since. He

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The Desiderata

*Go placidly amid the noise and haste,
and remember what peace there may be in silence.*

*As far as possible, without surrender,
be on good terms with all persons.*

*Speak your truth quietly and clearly; and listen to others,
even to the dull and ignorant; they too have their story.*

*Avoid loud and aggressive persons;
they are vexations to the spirit.*

*If you compare yourself with others,
you may become vain or bitter,
for always there will be greater and
lesser persons than yourself.*

*Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans.
Keep interested in your own career, however humble,
it's a real possession in the changing fortunes of time.*

*Exercise caution in your business affairs,
for the world is full of trickery.*

*But let this not blind you to what virtue there is;
many persons strive for high ideals,
and everywhere life is full of heroism.*

Be yourself.

Especially do not feign affection.

*Neither be cynical about love;
for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment,
it is as perennial as the grass.*

*Take kindly the counsel of the years,
gracefully surrendering the things of youth.*

Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune.

But do not distress yourself with dark imaginings.

Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness.

Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself.

*You are a child of the universe
no less than the trees and the stars;
you have a right to be here.*

*And whether or not it is clear to you,
no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should.*

*Therefore be at peace with God,
whatever you conceive him to be.*

*And whatever your labors and aspirations,
in the noisy confusion of life,
keep peace in your soul.*

*With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams,
it is still a beautiful world.*

Be cheerful.

Strive to be happy.

by Max Ehrmann