



Adopt some aphorisms to live by

Don't run with scissors. Stand up straight. Make sure you wear clean underwear. Call if you're going to be late.

From the time we are born, we become inculcated with mom-isms. Somehow it's not considered brainwashing when it's from a parent. Moms and dads repeat these words, ad infinitum, because of their love and concern for us. Some we vow never to repeat to our own children — "because I said so" or "because I'm your father, that's why" or "as long as you live in my house ..." — but we inevitably hear those words flow from our mouths anyway.

As we age, those phrases etch themselves in our brains. I don't think I've ever run with scissors, and I regularly catch myself slouching and force myself to sit up straighter.

From birth, we're exposed to others' words of wisdom. Those that strike a chord with us, we tend to adopt. Over the years, I've come across several that resonate just right. Here are a few:

➤ **The days are long; the years are short.** I overheard this in a conversation while sitting in an airport. It so aptly describes life as a parent. And it seems to be truer the older I get.

➤ **The only way out is through.** This one comes from my father (at least, that's where I first heard

it). Sometimes we face difficult tasks and wish they would just go away, but they don't. Get started and plow through to the end.

➤ **There is no gravity; Earth sucks.** OK, this is not so much an aphorism as a funny line that my sister had on a sign outside her college dorm room. But it does remind me to not take things too seriously *in this life* when they aren't going well.

➤ **Believe nothing you hear, and only half of what you see.** Perhaps this line from Mark Twain isn't something I should share because I make my living as a writer. Still, it reminds me to think critically about the information with which I'm presented, to consider the source and make value judgments about its validity.

➤ **That which does not destroy us makes us stronger.** Another good line — this one from Friedrich Nietzsche — about how to struggle through difficult times.

➤ **I love deadlines. I like the whooshing sound they make as they fly by.** A little self-indulgent, I'll admit. As a fellow writer, Douglas Adams clearly understood the fleeting nature of publishing.

➤ **Imagination is more important than knowledge.** I probably could write an entire column on the quotes of Albert Einstein, but this one is particularly important to me. It suggests the most valuable tool we can have is a life-long curiosity and love for learning.

➤ **Reality is merely an illusion, albeit a very persistent one.** Another from dear old "Al." Anyone who has read even a little bit about quantum mechanics knows there is far more in this world that we don't understand than we do. And there is simply too much that happens that simply can't be explained by science.

I'm curious what words of wisdom you choose to live by. Please e-mail me your favorite sayings, who shared them with you and what significance they have for you, and I might use them in a future column.

And Mom, don't worry. When I left the house this morning, my underwear was clean.

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