

**September 2, 2011**

***“Echoes of the Heart”***

*Reflections on Life and Community Living*

**High expectations.** Are you a *high expectations* person? Do you expect much from today or from the week or year ahead? Or, are expectations something you don't think much about?

There is something to be said for *letting life come to you* and not pushing too hard to make things happen in our lives. Still, as surveys suggest, boasting a sense of *high expectations* does seem to make a difference in our lives.

In a Calvin and Hobbes comic strip of some time back, Calvin is talking to Susie (his arch enemy) about a test they had just taken.

*What grade did you get, Susie,* Calvin asks? Her quick response is, *I got an “A.”*

*Really,* Calvin replies, *boy, I'd hate to be you. I got a “C.”*

Curious, Susie asks, *Why on earth would you rather get a “C” than an “A?”*

To which Calvin sort of smugly retorts, *I find my life is a lot easier when everyone's expectations of me are lower.*

We've all known parents who put too much pressure on their children for achievement—parents who too quickly confuse a good report card with strong self-esteem and an internal sense of well-being. Yet, healthy *high expectations* would seem to be a good thing.

By *healthy*, I mean a level of expectation commensurate with the person's innate gifts and talents. The key is to somehow be able to tap into the most extraordinary gifts and possibilities that lie within each of us.

**Aiming high and self-realization.** To aim high in utilizing our gifts is to actively seek to uncover these gifts and skill possibilities. Also, it is to *not* be lazy and indifferent to our development as a person. Certainly, one of the tragedies of our common existence is the unrealized potential of any of us.

When the best within us is not given some nurturing and encouragement for realization, it is a sad day on the planet. Wherever there is unrealized talent in the arts, in sports, in academia—in anything—the rest of us are the lesser for it.

Our world needs excellence in all areas. Indeed, the pursuit of excellence makes all of us better. And how can we ever know to what levels of excellence we can ascend if we don't aim for the “A” in the class and not the “C?”

Over time, healthy *high expectations* affect our results in life. They affect the way we embrace every new opportunity and situation that present themselves. If we expect a certain standard of performance, then we put forth the necessary effort and preparation to achieve it, as opposed to just *going through the motions* of a listless mediocrity.

There is always the sense in life that we don't know who we are until we discover to what heights of self-fulfillment we can soar. A healthy set of expectations about our lives positively affects the way we do everything. It feels good to be utilizing our God-given gifts and to be excelling in the process. Moreover, our successes also help to cushion our occasional defeats.

**High expectations and life as *process*.** No matter how great our successes or how high our expectations, there will be times when we fail. How can we not? After all, we're not robots; we're human beings and things won't always go our way. But there's a huge difference between falling short of our goal, having given it our best and not realizing our goal because we never tried.

The content of our spirit as human beings (and our character) is more about the *process* of living than the final results that ensue. For it is in the *process* of living—of creating, giving, loving, working hard and persisting—that the deepest joys of life come our way.

If we never try to get the advanced degree or start the new business, if we never venture into new relationships, never test our skills against the best, how can we know what might have been?

Aiming high in life is certainly important if we hope for high achievement; but more important, still, is having given ourselves to the *process*—the process of personal growth and transcendence. Because it is there—in the *process*—that the meaning and purpose of life are revealed to us.