

“Echoes of the Heart”

Reflections on Life and Community Living

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Taking the high road. With the dawning of the New Year, it’s an opportune time to take pause and dare to *imagine* the year ahead. What do we want it to be like? What are some of our deepest hopes and dreams?

I came across a couple at Costco the other day whom I’ve known for a few years. They were there with their children having lunch (has to be the best buy in Miami Lakes). Anyway, at 38 years old, he’d just suffered a serious (is there any other kind?) heart attack; and earlier in the year, her mother had suffered a debilitating stroke.

They were coping, more or less; but, clearly, life had come at them hard in 2007. Their comment was (and they didn’t mean it in a bad way): they couldn’t wait for the year to be over. For them, it had been a tough year and they were eager for the New Year to break in.

All the time, in our lives, it seems, stuff is happening. Family relations are stressed at multiple levels. Loved ones die, sometimes allowing us no *time for preparation* (in a sense, of course, we are never *prepared*). Our children marry too young, choose the wrong career path, and sadly, lose the spark of their childhood when our hopes for them soared with the eagles.

So what do we do?

At times, we are stunned to note the levels of sadness and disappointment that have crept into our lives over the years. We never anticipated it; never thought it would happen.

Where did we go wrong? And what can we do, if anything, to make things right; to reverse some of the poor choices, make amends, and somehow move on with our lives?

The first thing we need to do—and the New Year, again, is the ideal time to do it—is to determine, right now—today—with the whole year ahead of us, to *take the high road* in every thing we do. Every decision we make, every crisis we find ourselves mired in: *take the high road*.

Why the high road? On the *high road*, people act big. They see the *big picture* of their lives and the lives of others, and they approach life with a mature patience and understanding. They tuck away their pride and ego, subordinating them to the *big picture* needs of family, team or group.

On the *high road*, it is understood that we all have our bad moments, even bad days and weeks. And that, therefore, now and then, we all need some slack, a longer rope of patience, understanding and forgiveness.

Again, the *high road* sees the *big picture*. And sometimes, in the *big picture*, today is not the day to *have the talk*. Sometimes, *the talk* needs to be put on hold until the stars are more advantageously lined up. The time will come. It's just not today. And maybe not even next week.

On the *high road*, there's an evolved understanding of ambiguity, of the lingering complexities of human personality and of family/ community life. Much of the time, our behaviors (our reactions, our responses) have multiple meanings. And there are different layers to understanding them.

For example, when we're *vulnerable* because of a personal loss or a serious health issue, logic and reason are sometimes thrown to the wind. In a word, we're not on our game, not functioning out of our normal sense of self and what our lives are about.

Time and grace. There are periods in our lives when, more than anything, we need time—time and an abundance of grace.

Life on the *high road* comprehends this. It comprehends it because it has a sense of the *big picture*. The *big picture* endeavors to see and understand life from the projected *end* of our life back into the present. It prompts us to consider how we would want to think of our lives (how we would want to feel, too) in the future—ten, twenty or fifty years from now.

And it advises us to *act today* in ways that enable us to be that person (with those thoughts and feelings).

Friends, it's the New Year. It's a time for new beginnings and for new awareness. Consider the *high road*; and may the fruits of its wisdom and love be a blessing for us each one.