



## **LESSONS FROM NATURE**

Did you ever notice that nature is a great teacher? It's true. Valuable life lessons abound wherever you look. All you have to do is pay attention; look and learn.

Recently, I've been spending quite a bit of time outside, as the weather in Arizona has been beautiful! I started paying close attention to the plants and animals around me and I realize that they offer a lot of valuable information, even life lessons, if one takes the time to 'see' them. Once I started to pay attention, something became clear to me. People can enhance the quality of their lives by taking on some of nature's characteristics. For example:

### **1. RESILIENCE**

A couple weeks ago (middle of March) I decided to 'clean up' the plants in my yard. I was tired of looking at them....all shriveled and brown and apparently dead. We had had several nights with below freezing temperatures and many AZ plants are not cut out for that kind of weather. Sadly, I thought to myself, "I am going to have to cut down two trees, the Hibiscus bushes and all of the Bougainvillea plants. I was sure there would be a trip to the plant nursery in my near future, to replace all the plants that had not made it through the winter.

As I started to prune, trim and cut down the eyesore plants, I was shocked! At the base of almost every tree and plant were tiny little buds of GREEN! The plants were alive, even if only at their very core. What RESILIENCE!

People can be resilient too. Often times, we are thrown into circumstances that are not expected, that push us to our limits and to which we are not accustomed. Things happen such as natural disasters, unforeseen illnesses, loss of jobs, divorce, death of a loved one; the list goes on and on. Any one of these events can make us feel like we want to give up, just shrivel up and die. But, we don't have to give up. WE ARE RESILIENT! We just have to look for and hold onto that glimmer of life deep down inside. We all have it. If we hold on long enough, just like the plants, new life and hope will start to grow within us.

### **2. ADAPTATION**

I have lived in or visited many different climates. The Midwest is hot and humid in the summer and extremely cold in the winter. The desert is dry and HOT most of the



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time. Tropical areas tend to be rainy, hot and humid. Places of high altitude have less oxygen. Each climate has a different type of plant-life that flourishes there. Why? It's because, in each climate plants have adapted to their surroundings and circumstances.

We humans have adapted to living in a multitude of climates, as well. We know how to dress for the long winter and how to drive through snow. We have air conditioning in our cars and homes and offices to survive the summer in the desert. Our lungs automatically have a greater capacity as we adapt to living at higher elevations. If we don't like it, we can move. That's the easy part.

Sometimes, however, we don't have control over the things in life that are changing. Technology, for example, has changed dramatically in the past 20 years. It has changed the way we communicate and the way we do business. What was once called the pony EXPRESS is now called SNAIL mail because it's so slow. Good luck trying to listen to your eight track tape. Most cars don't even have a cassette player anymore. So what do we do? We ADAPT! Like the foliage of each climate has adapted to its surroundings and changing conditions, we must expand our knowledge base and adapt to changing technology to be successful in the way we do business and communicate with each other.

### **3. PREPAREDNESS**

The other day I was out for a morning jog. It hadn't rained in several weeks, and as I ran past the multitude of plants and cacti in the desert, I wondered, "How do they survive"? Seriously, we can go for months on end without rain, and yet, the cacti survive. The answer is that they are prepared! I did a little research online and found that most cacti can store a lot of water. The Saguaro Cactus (you know, the big one that looks like a pitch fork) can store up to 1 ton of water. That's hundreds of gallons! Obviously, in order to survive, it has to be prepared for those long periods of time without rain.

The same is true with animals. They prepare for certain situations. The grizzly bear, for example, will eat as much as it can in the fall so that it can survive its hibernation period during the winter. Squirrels will gather nuts in the fall in order to have enough food for the winter.

What about us? Are we prepared for all the situations in life? Of course we can't prepare for EVERYTHING, but we can be prepared for a great deal.



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In today's economy, there are ways to be prepared around your home. Watch sale adds and then stock up on household items and foods that you will use. Start to pay yourself first from every paycheck you get. Even if you can only put away \$5 or \$10 from each paycheck, start with something, so you can begin to build a reserve for a 'rainy day'.

Prepare for the good things in life too. Prepare for success in your business. If you don't have a plan for success, you probably won't be successful. It's like the lottery winner who is flat broke in two years. Why does that happen? It's because the person didn't have a plan and wasn't prepared to truly deal with millions of dollars. Do you need specific education or prior experience in order to proceed in your career? Don't wait till it's too late and then say, "I wish I had been more prepared!" Take action today, prepare for tomorrow, and reap the rewards!

#### **4. UNCONDITIONAL LOVE**

For those of you who have pets, especially dogs, you know what unconditional love is all about. How wonderful it is to walk in the door and be greeted by your best furry companion! Day in and day out, your pet is always there for you. Whether you are happy or sad or irritable or angry, your pet doesn't care. It's still there by your side. Pets don't ask for anything in return, hence, the 'unconditional' part of the love. Oh sure, they do love to go out for a walk, or play fetch with a ball, or soak up some attention from you, but in general, they are just happy to be there.

We can learn a good lesson from our pets. Can you honestly say that you love unconditionally? Do you love everyone unconditionally? The world would be a much better place if we could all learn to do so. That's not to say that you have to agree with the things a person does or stands for, or that you should subject yourself to cruel treatment from others. It doesn't mean that one should stay in an abusive relationship.

When we are able to see that each human being on this planet is really a perfect soul, having a human experience, then we can learn to love unconditionally. That's when we will realize that everyone is exactly where they are supposed to be, and doing what they are supposed to be doing for their human experience. When we can see them on a soul level is when we can truly love everybody unconditionally.



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## 5. RELAXATION

Did you know that a cat can sleep up to 20 hours per day? That's some serious relaxation! And, cats know how to do it. They find a comfortable place, off the beaten track, snuggle in and sleep. Sometimes, I can't even find my cat when she's sleeping because she has found a corner or some crevice where nobody would think to look. That way, she can sleep peacefully and undisturbed.

In today's hectic world, it's sometimes challenging to find time to truly relax. Our plates are full with making meals for the family, cleaning the house, doing laundry, working 8 hours per day, driving the children to their activities, board meetings, family gatherings, etc, etc. As the list goes on and on, the stress level goes up and up, which can actually lead to emotional breakdown and/or physical illness.

It is critical that we take time for ourselves, if not every day, then at least a couple times per week. For some, a good workout is actually relaxing and stress reducing. For others, soaking in a bubble bath, getting a manicure or pedicure, listening to music, sitting in the Jacuzzi, meditation, or just taking a 20 minute nap can be fully rejuvenating! Find what works for you and begin to truly relax. Most often, you will find that all the other items on your to-do list can wait. Then you will actually have better focus and be more productive.

Isn't it amazing what we can learn from nature? Plants and animals are amazing in their ability to be resilient, adapt to their surroundings, prepare for the future, give unconditional love, and truly be able to relax. These are just a few characteristics I've noticed within the past few weeks. All are great examples of qualities we humans can incorporate into our lives. When things seem crazy and start spinning out of control, just look around you. Look and learn. The examples are already there for us. We are truly blessed to live in such a wonderful world!