

The Value of a Penny

By Dianne Durante and Kirsten Hagman

The last few years have been the most challenging financial times in this country since the Great Depression struck in the 1930s. Plants are closing, established businesses are folding, weather is destroying crops, and morale is low. Society has been reminded of how fragile life is. Knowing now that things can change in an instant, “on a dime” as the old saying goes, why not focus on this dime, or a penny, to think about ways to focus on what is really important? Let’s break down the penny and some things that it can remind us.

A Little Penny: A penny is a small and seemingly insignificant coin in our currency, yet it reminds us that every little bit counts. There has been some recent debate about doing away with the penny, but what if we gave away a penny a day, or saved a penny a day, instead? Often you will hear of a school that collects pennies to see what a million of something looks like, and how long it takes to save one million pennies. The school donates the money to a worthy cause. What it really is teaching is the power of the penny, the power of patience, and the importance of saving even little things. These are certainly lessons that we all need in this age of instant gratification. It is a reminder to get into the savings habit, saving small, maybe a dollar a day, 10 dollars a month. Whatever you can, just start small and hang in there and you can reach your goals.

Little Things Mean A Lot: The penny offers a reminder in other areas besides financial, it reminds us that all little things can mount up and become valuable assets. A tiny compliment makes someone feel good, she passes it on and smiles to another person, and the good feeling ball is rolling. It is easy to do little kindnesses, like opening a door for someone, letting a car in the traffic line, thanking the waitress for service, or calling the checkout person by name. Research shows that these are emotional intelligence skills and they are the skills that can be taught and make a person more successful in the workplace and in relationships. These little things amount to BIG successes.

The Penny Has Two Sides: Certainly we have called ‘heads of tails’ more than once in life. The two sides of the coin can remind us that with every issue there can be at least two views, and probably more. We often are so blinded by our own perspective that we fail to acknowledge there is another way to look at the same issue. At work and at home, we need pennies scattered around to act as reminders for us to listen to others points of view, or to shift our perspective and open our eyes to other possibilities. The value of hearing and seeing others viewpoint is that it increases success and cooperation.

See A Penny – Pick It Up – All Day Long You’ll Have Good Luck: Years ago pennies were seen as good luck. People really did stop and pick them up. Today we know that luck is more than stopping for pennies, but is actually thinking positively. Successful people see themselves as lucky. They live positive lives and try to be around other positive people. The new psychology that has grown out of the past decade is known as positive psychology. It acknowledges the importance of thinking positive thoughts. It shows that positive people are healthier and live happier lives. Praise yourself and others for a job well done. Be optimistic. See stumbling stones as building blocks. Stop worrying and start believing in the good that is awaiting you and you will be amazed at the way your life becomes “luckier.”

Abe Lincoln And The Penny: The 16th president of the United States is on the penny. He is remembered for many things, but the nickname Honest Abe is the one to focus on now. Let the penny remind you of this important trait, another emotional intelligence trait, Honesty. How different our lives would be if we could just remember that honesty is the best policy. Rotary International has something that they call the Four Way Test. They encourage that members ask themselves four questions before saying something that might be hurtful or harmful to others. “Is it the truth?” “Is it fair to all concerned?” “Will it build goodwill and better friendships?” “Will it be beneficial to all concerned?” Being honest and telling the truth is important, as is the telling the truth in the right spirit. Become a good spirited truth teller.

A Penny For Your Thoughts: One thing in life that can help you to be successful is have good communication skills. Many people misunderstand and believe that communication is about being able to get your point across clearly but there is much more to it than that. Communication is about sending and receiving information accurately. To receive the information we must listen! Remember that you have 2 ears and 1 mouth and you should use them in that ratio. Studies have revealed that communication is 56% body language, 36% tone & only 8% actual words. Be cautious about how you are combining these elements when you are trying to communicate with others.

In God We Trust: T. Chardin said, “We are not human beings having a spiritual experience, we are spiritual beings having a human experience.” Take a few minutes to evaluate or reevaluate your religious or spiritual beliefs. They are an important ingredient in life and sometimes we get so busy we forget to take time to notice what our core values are. Often our values stem from a religious or spiritual center. Examine or explore this area of your life as well.

Anna Quindlen, journalist, gave a commencement address at Harvard University. She said, “No one ever said on his deathbed, I wish I had spent more time at the office.” She urged the graduates to get a life, not just to make a living. It was a gentle reminder to the graduates about the valuable things in life. While work is a necessary part of life, we should use this opportunity to shift our focus back to satisfying our other needs and reconnecting with the people in our lives, colleagues and friends alike. Use the penny to help you with some of this reframing in your business and personal life.