

Ben's Blog

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A thoughtful look at the lives we lead today through the eyes of America's Grandfather

As I see the world around me changing in ways that I could have never imagined, I take solace in looking back at Ben Franklin's methods for living, his observations of the human condition, and how he pictured an evolving democracy for the good of humankind. I hope to read his words and then relate them to how the world is today and see if he can once again lead us to a better place.

"Lose no time; be always employ'd in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions."
- Benjamin Franklin on Industry

INDUSTRY

Every day I look at the portrait of Benjamin Franklin hanging in my house and I can feel him say, "Industry". He makes me want to live up to his ideals with wit and wisdom while discovering how to live a best life, and I think he can help you, too.

Franklin chose industry as one of the many virtues he wanted to work on in his life. After I left over 15 years of classroom teaching, I too wanted to be sure I focused on using my time wisely while finding useful actions to create a meaningful life. This was Franklin's 'industry'.

Lose no time

Time is precious, fleeting, and something we all definitely want to make the most of as we go about our life. That doesn't mean we need to become workaholics or focus only on our breadwinning. Franklin wasn't talking about productivity. The word industry meant so much more to him. "Lose no time" just means to be in the moment and really love what you are doing so that time won't be lost. If that means performing a task for survival, completing a job to make money, or relishing in a little self-care, your time will be well-spent as you use it to accomplish your goals.

Be always employ'd in something useful

Our tasks may be useful to our existence, useful to others so they may thrive, or useful to help us up the ladder as we build the life we want. These are the 'something useful' things that Franklin means. Only you can decide if a task is useful. Useful to you may not appear to be useful to others, and that's okay. We all need different amounts of downtime, work time, and time spent with others helping with their needs. How you employ your time must be useful to you.

Cut off all unnecessary actions

Franklin's reference to 'unnecessary actions' means all of those things that we do that will not help us meet our goals. Those things we say 'yes' to even though they serve no purpose for us. Now this doesn't mean helping others or doing things that may seem

trivial or time-wasting, sometimes even these things are actually helping us achieve goals of being a caring and loving person, whether to ourselves or others. Unnecessary actions are those that do not allow progress towards the life you want or even those that will actually cause you to stall out on your journey.

Franklin may appear very industrious when we consider all that he accomplished in his lifetime. But perhaps he was industrious not only by physical endeavors, but by also employing his time in ways that were useful to him, pursuing his observations and creative thoughts in ways that suited him. By following his interests and focusing on topics he was interested in, he opened himself to a state of flow that always ends in awakenings – eventually. Allowing yourself to practice industry in ways that support you and your goals can keep you focused, motivated, and ready for positive experiences and opportunities.