

# **Family Influence**

Benjamin Huot

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## 2 Blood, Sweat, and Tears

An Epic Poem by Ben Huot

Arising from the Inland Empire  
In a land of Opportunity  
He toiled all summer  
As a peasant farmer  
He broke his back in the fields  
From dawn until dusk  
Chasing headless chickens  
And defeathering them  
The more he argued  
The more his share of the work increased  
Proving himself with the pen  
And finding fulfillment in homework  
He pioneered the laser industry  
And his original research can be seen everywhere  
A leader by heart  
He broke into the ranks  
In a trial by fire  
Leading young boys  
To build forts in the forest  
Immersing himself Native American lore  
And dancing the funky chicken  
He earned himself a place  
In southern California surfer country  
Camping out in the library for weeks on end  
He struck out for a career in social work  
With his passion for learning  
He played the pivotal role  
In saving Israel from its neighbors  
Leading his line of dishwashers  
And outperforming the trained sanitation workers  
In Yom Kippur, 1972  
He was the American with the propeller hat  
He came home to break into the seed industry  
The man behind all distribution of seed  
In the back woods of Idaho and Washington  
Graduating from his studies  
His life changed forever  
As his soulmate returned his love  
And clumsy attempts at romance  
The most eligible young woman on campus  
Made him the happiest man in the world  
Finishing his schooling in Denver  
He had me, the highlight of his life  
And my sister  
As he prepared the dead for a banquet  
And sent them to greener pastures

## Family Influence

Blazing across the country  
Styling in a compact hatchback  
They settled close to family  
In the Willamette Valley  
His hand bled all day and night  
As he struggled in the steel jaws  
Creating beams for houses  
And wood that was stronger than steel  
Fighting for years to break into management  
He decided to change course midstream  
The school sirens beckoned him  
And he could not resist their call  
Living in the back of a station wagon  
For over a year  
He studied all day  
And worked all night  
Keeping a 4.0 average  
He was beyond human  
But he yearned for more challenges  
And he had the opportunity  
So he applied to be a teacher's teacher  
And his first job he had his own school  
And now he is a leader of that small town  
And he doesn't mind the smell of the mills  
His dog and 3 cats keep him busy  
And his wife takes care of him  
He had a nice life despite the fact that  
His life was filled with blood, sweat, and tears

# 3 Mom and Grandma Poetry

By Ben Huot

## 3.1 With Her

My first memory is of her  
Taking her to the hospital  
The sunrise was beautiful  
And I was so young  
My next memory is of building  
With Lincoln logs she had given me  
It was a dark rainy morning  
And I could see my sister going out to school  
I remember bringing home stacks of schoolwork  
And she after each one, gave a comment  
We pined up a flannel character  
For each day of Christmas  
We made crafts for Cub Scouts  
And we went to the Blue and Gold banquet  
She felt my hamster  
To check if he was dead  
We traveled in the nation's capitol  
After my conference was over  
She came to watch me run  
Even though I was dead last in every race  
She came to be a chaperon  
At a speech conference  
She kept me alive with her letters  
As I trained for war  
She supported my leaving  
And gave me a place to stay  
She brought me to the hospital  
And filled out paperwork  
She gave me furniture  
And helped me with my finances  
So now I am independent  
And these are just a few  
Of the good memories I have  
With her

## 3.2 How Long?

What is a single tear worth?  
What would one more minute be like?  
How can I count past a day  
When each hour tears a piece of me away?  
What would I do with an hour?  
How would I remember you?

## Family Influence

Can I last a week?  
Each moment lasts forever  
Sitting in anticipation  
Sleep beckons me  
Will a dream draw me closer?  
There are no visitors at night  
Maybe this afternoon  
You can wander amongst the panorama of my longing  
Tears hurt too much to continue  
Silence is too hard to keep  
How will I show my affection  
When I am so weak  
I can barely remember your face  
Your voice is weak  
What would it be like  
For you to call out my name  
My memory grows faint  
I grasp at straws  
The longer I think  
The less I can imagine  
Did you love me less  
When I saw you more often?  
Are a few hours too much?  
Do you try to silence my voice  
The days drag on endlessly  
There is plenty of room in my heart  
Why do I feel so down?  
Why does Wesley cheer me up?  
When I answer the phones  
How can I stop from thinking of your hang-up  
Will the therapist want me to see you less?  
Will companionship count for therapy?  
The longer I am away  
The sooner I get to see you again  
If only the wait  
Would pass by much quicker

### 3.3 Talking

Another day  
Another phone call  
What do you want?  
I called to say  
You are my friend  
You are the mustard on my soy dogs  
You are the casserole at just the right temperature  
When I feel like crying  
When the world seems so large and I so small  
I think of you and smile  
There is no medicine that acts more quickly

### 3.2 How Long?

Than the comfort of your voice  
One moment in time  
Is what four hours with you is like  
The world stops  
And your thoughts make a soft light  
And a warm glow  
I stop to think of you  
And I am at ease  
When I dial the phone  
It is like I am calling home  
In one word  
You restore sanity to my mind  
Your prayers  
Flow the current like a gentle creek  
You watch over me  
Like a tree that stretches over me  
An inch above my head  
There is no fear  
When you are serious  
There is still hope  
Even when you are sick  
We walk at the same pace  
But you are more steady than me  
And you can walk a mile more  
There is nothing that could keep you from caring  
No frustration could keep you from trying  
You have more impact on me than the military  
You are more important than finding a wife  
Even in my darkest hour I know I can count on you  
No voice is stronger than yours

### 3.4 In a moment

We watch the grass change from green to yellow  
We wake up to fresh air and new light  
The days have rhythm  
And the years do to  
Our life we take at one day at a time  
Looking forward to a night of restful sleep  
When something changes  
We take baby steps  
But sometimes things happen more quickly  
Sometimes there is no time to stop and reflect  
We spend much of our time preparing for these moments  
But how could one be ready  
It all changes in a moment  
We hurry to make it in time  
But we must wait again  
Injury can happen in a moment  
But healing takes much longer

Flowers can bring beauty  
And cards hope  
But a friend is what brings joy  
How do we love without crying?  
When those we love are hurting  
Job made time to thank God in his trials  
But we are not patriarchs  
We are only sheep looking for a shepherd  
We all fear the inevitable  
But there in lies our greatest hope  
It is in these times we look for guidance  
But all we have to do is look around  
In our midst is a peace  
A comforter that never leaves  
Who can say there is a a reason  
Why the grass is not always green  
Or why we can not always be young  
When time stands still  
It can be a blessing  
Every word can be meaningful  
When we look to our special verses  
And awkward pictures  
And handwritten letters  
Sometimes a moment can last forever  
And that is not always bad

### **3.5 Just a Token Memory**

I can hold it in my hands  
I can appreciate the significance  
But what I would only give  
To have the person behind the memory  
I pass by the painting  
And I get a glimpse of a shadow  
Is she there?  
Within one minute  
I see back to my childhood  
Of house owned by others  
And events long forgotten  
What joy there was  
In an hour of anticipation  
What a time we had  
With simple pleasures  
Picking out cereal  
And waking up in our second home  
Years later we were closer  
And we could ride our bikes  
Over there  
The same people  
All older and more their own person

## Family Influence

A walking pace  
I could not match  
Cats I could not catch  
A talk that seemed to go on forever  
I not grasping the accent  
She patient and forgiving  
Then flashing forward  
Like a dream I saw her  
Meeting me in the hospital  
And there was little to say  
I could not even  
Keep my sanity  
But I was always a little weird  
And she was so much more sophisticated  
I don't know if it was really a shock  
As I began to recover  
She was given only a little more time  
And she moved again  
And I saw her more at the end  
Than ever before  
She had humor to the very end  
And picked up on the slightest subtlety  
Beary and Bow sat with her  
And they were very well behaved

# 4 Parents' Advice

by Ben Huot

dedicated to my parents

## 4.1 Tapping the Maple:

A Philosophy for the Disease of Diabetes (in honor of my mother)

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." --1 Corinthians 10:31

"By pleasure we mean the absence of pain in the body and of trouble in the soul. It is not an unbroken succession of drinking-bouts and of merrymaking, not sexual love, not the enjoyment of the fish and other delicacies of a luxurious table, which produce a pleasant life; it is sober reasoning, searching out the grounds of every choice and avoidance, and banishing those beliefs through which the greatest disturbances take possession of the soul." --Epicurus in his "Letter to Menoecus"

It is common for someone who is starting as a Buddhist monk to be required to get their diet under control before going any further into advanced practices like meditation. In traditional China, before someone could be a politician, they had to master being a doctor, and before they could become a doctor they had to master their own health. In modern times we like to isolate problems and pull things out of context and in so doing miss the main point in keeping ourselves healthy and our community harmonious. We like to say that all you have to do is drink diet cola, and only eat high protein foods. But the body needs variety more than any thing else. We cannot trick the body into thinking something is sugar or fat that is not or consume carbohydrates that can't be digested. In the end, the body will manage the best it can, but your weight will go out of control and you may have some of your organs fail on you. Your diet will likely need to be even more restrictive. The problems could have been prevented in the first place by just eating a wide variety of foods with the appropriate serving sizes. We try the same things in our modern culture on a political level. We make complex laws so that they can get passed through congress, but they end up with so many loop holes that the problem is just masked, not resolved. We wait for problems to get so big that they require radical solutions and often they create even more serious side effects than the problems they were meant to fix. A hundred years ago children had to work long hours in order to feed their families and their working conditions were inhuman. Now our kids roam the streets in gangs because they aren't allowed to hold jobs. Instead of teaching kids what is relevant to what they need to get employed like how to read, write and do math, we have them play games on computers, learn about how we guess the world was created, how the government is supposed to work, play games with balls, and learn the corporations' version of history. The kids are bored and then they cause problems for the rest of their class.

"Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another." --1 Corinthians 11:33

"Of all the means which are procured by wisdom to ensure happiness throughout the whole of life, by far the most important is the acquisition of friends." --Epicurus in "Principal Doctrines" (Article 27)

All of the ten commandments God gave to Moses involve our interactions with other people. God never intended us to live as high-tech hermits. But that is what we have become as we "advance" technologically. We now can see the world through our computer screens, get virtual dates, and form communities all with out leaving our rooms. It is true that some things can be done much easier by computer, but although good writing and art can be communicated effectively across the Web, in order to create them it requires experiences outside the computer screen and reading real books and going to real places. The best way to tell if you are out

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of balance is to live in close contact with other people. And relationships that are formed through physical interactions will survive longer and are more fulfilling.

### 4.2 Fading Shadows

A Philosophy for the Disease of Depression (in honor of my mother)

"And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity." --2 Peter 1:5-7

"The value of Virtue is therefore peculiar and distinct; it depends on kind and not on degree." --Cicero in "Cato's Defense of Stoic Ethics"

Virtue depends on certain defining moments, whereas happiness depends partially on the length of time it occurs over. So suffering for a longer period of time does not necessarily build character, while struggling at critical moments of life can bring about growth. Depression for some people like myself can happen when I get overtired and will almost always go away after I go to sleep. But depression can be caused by a variety of factors and some are less intense and more easily treated than others. Clinical or major depression is caused by an imbalance of chemicals in the brain and lasts for six months or longer despite treatment. This kind of depression is all consuming where a person will not get out of bed for weeks at a time and they sink as if into a pit where they can see no escape. There is hope with modern medication and despite the fact that medication may be necessary, attitude also helps, because, as it is with most medicines, the symptoms are only reduced, they are hardly ever taken away completely. But it is the lessening of degree where the depression can be reduced to the point of being useful in growing patience and sympathy for others. Because while at its full strength there is no way out, at a lower intensity it can be effectively dealt with.

"We deem health to be deserving of a certain value, but we do not reckon it a good; at the same time we rate no value so highly as to place it above virtue." --Cicero in "Cato's Defense of Stoic Ethics"

Although staying healthy and being financially secure can increase happiness, what gives eternal joy is living a holy life. Health is more than just your physical well-being. Your relationships with others as well as what you do when no one is watching define who you are and are the basis for your true self-worth. When you suffer in pain for what seems no reason there is not much redeeming out of the experience. But the attitude you choose to approach the inevitable situation with can give meaning and value despite the suffering involved. Depression is in one sense simply painful like physical sickness or serious injury. In another sense though depression can be greatly affected by your attitude. Certainly with major depression your whole mood is changed by your brain chemistry and at a certain point it is too powerful to fight against successfully unless under the influence of powerful antidepressants. Fighting against your melancholy, once brought under control by medication if necessary, can bring a sense of control and can be a way to grow from the experience. I know when I struggle with paranoia, which in some ways is like depression with the simple pain, medication factor, and attitude component, it is empowering when I am able to identify certain thoughts as irrational or not useful. This is the basis of meditation - to gain control over your thoughts. Meditation uses the method of focusing on one thing or letting go of each thought as it enters your head as a way to strengthen the mind. Unfortunately, I get too exhausted by my medication to be able to put the necessary effort into meditating.

### 4.3 Living with Passion

(dedicated to my father)

## Family Influence

"Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest. I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all." --Ecclesiastes 9:9-11

We spend our youth growing strong, our child rearing years growing wise, and our career building years growing our skills; but this is all of no account. Our life is mostly a product of our circumstances but we need not worry as God is Lord of our lives and has a plan for us. All we can see is a hint there of what we can't explain which we can attribute to God with faith, but it is in the times we never stop to notice that God really works miracles in our lives and is faithful in watching over us. We can easily count the times that we have suffered loss, but we never seem to keep track of the blessings we receive, assuming some other source than our Heavenly Father. Our earthly life is not the end all of our existence, but it gives us an opportunity to learn skills that are unique to our time on Earth and to enjoy our family. Life is just a set of experiences that means nothing in and of itself, but as we live a life of faith we can see how God's grace gives everlasting meaning to our lives. But while we are here we have opportunities to learn and grow in skills and God is asking us to have a passion about it. We don't know what we will do after we die and are raised to Heaven, but there must be some way in which we can use our skills to some eternal significance. And we can't know how our passion that we live our lives with affects others. We need not fear the unknown and the lack of purpose we feel in our lives, but use it to grow our faith.

"After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." --Jeremiah 31:33

All God asks us is to follow our conscience and in the faith of Abraham. We don't have to worry about whether we know the Law well enough or our pastor has a direct line to God. We are given an opportunity to always know what is right and wrong. We need only follow our hearts. God wants us to live our life not thinking through every possible ramification of what we do and worrying whether or not it will net more good than problems. We can only live by faith and by the grace that comes from God's side.

## 4.4 Diligence Pays Off

(dedicated to my father)

"The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute." --Proverbs 12:24

Diligence is a universal language and those that give 150% regularly will always be respected by their employer.

"The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat." --Proverbs 13:4

Working hard is a reliable way to be sure you are provided for.

"In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury." --Proverbs 14:23

The gift of gab is not respected in the workplace and is frowned upon by management.

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"Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty; open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread." --Proverbs 20:13

Working long hours shows your commitment to the job and helps secure your place at your workplace.

"The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness; but of every one that is hasty only to want." --Proverbs 21:5

Patience will keep you focused and your job will remain secure.

"Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men." --Proverbs 22:29

If you want your employer to treat you well then work faithfully every hour of your employment.

"He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after vain persons shall have poverty enough." --Proverbs 28:19

Focus on your work and do not trouble yourself with trying to impress your co-workers with anything besides your work ethic.

"And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour." --Ecclesiastes 2:10