

## Thirty-Six Life Lessons I Wish I Had Learned Earlier

by [Mike Absatz](#)

In my sixty-four years of living, I have experienced incredible joy, health, and abundance. I have also had hard times, setbacks, betrayals, and disappointments. I grew up on a poultry farm in New Jersey. Yes, New Jersey did have farms back in the day. We were very poor, and I was bullied for six years by classmates, from first to seventh grade. Life was indeed hell back then. It is much better now, and I feel very connected to many incredibly wonderful people. Between my wife and myself, we have six adult children, two grandchildren, and many remarkable friends. In other words, I have had a good life so far. I have learned some important lessons in my years. Some of these lessons took many years to learn. I might have avoided some difficulties if I knew then what I know now. However, no regrets. I hope you find these worth thinking about.

1. What we do in the world comes back to us in some way at some future time. I have learned to put out positive energy into the world without thinking about what I am getting back.
2. We select people to share our lives who will teach us something important. Those lessons are not always enjoyable, but they are valuable. I have tried to figure out what I can learn from every situation.
3. We can turn negatives into positives if we look hard enough. Perspective and attitude matter a lot.
4. Humility is crucial. My Higher Power is the magician and I am the magician's helper. Together, we can co-create peace, love, and harmony.
5. If we take care of our bodies, they will take care of us. I try to watch what I eat (most of the time) and get enough rest, exercise and sleep.
6. We can be friends with people who only give back to us sporadically. They need our help. At the same time, there has to be some give-and-take.
7. We can choose to stay away from people who use abusive, deceitful, controlling, or manipulative tactics. We can set clear boundaries. We do not deserve to be abused in any way by anyone.
8. I try to focus on similarities rather than differences in race, religion, age, sexual orientation, social class. I try not to label people - because they are more complicated than I can ever know.
9. We can find natural ways to get high, like nature, music, friendships -- without using substances or activities.
10. Listening is very important. Most people have a story they want to tell. We can learn something from most people's stories.
11. The challenge is to have the maturity and wisdom of adulthood, coupled with the wonder and spontaneity of a child.
12. Life needs to be celebrated often, and people need to be told we care before they die.
13. Honesty and integrity are crucial traits. We must be trustworthy in order to be trusted.
14. It is important to have quiet, solitary, meditative, prayerful time.
15. I try not to gossip about others and criticize others. It just creates bad energy.

16. I keep trying, even when it is difficult. Staying focused and motivated is a big challenge, especially when things aren't going right. Sometimes, we won't get the results we want, but may get something better.
17. If we discover our gifts and talents, and find ways of sharing them with the world, we will be happy.
18. Every being needs respect -- including animals, and the earth itself.
19. We can mentor young people because they need us. We have something to offer them, and they are our future.
20. When I am angry, I try to temper my response. I make I statements about what I need, and try not to emotionally explode. Impulsive outbursts sometimes leave lasting scars that my apologies can't erase.
21. Patience and forgiveness are important qualities. Anyone can be annoying at times, especially me.
22. The elderly need our help and support. If we are fortunate, we will be elderly one day and want someone to help us out.
23. Resilience is vital. We must not let adversity get us down. Everyone has suffered, and with support and guidance, many people recover from the depths of despair. I have seen people make remarkable transformations in their lives.
24. People need connection and contact. I try to stay in touch with my friends.
25. The serenity prayer is correct. The challenge is to discover what we can control and what is beyond our control. We can do our best about the things we have some control over. The other stuff must be turned over to our Higher Power.
26. Every mistake offers a lesson. Maybe there are no real mistakes after all.
27. I try to keep a diverse circle of friends. Their differences make my life more interesting, and I can an understanding from each of them.
28. While world events are important, they are often hyped up in the media. We cannot truly love if we are constantly in fear for our lives.
29. If we believe in abundance rather than scarcity, we can share what we have with others. It makes life better for everyone.
30. Children need to hear the stories of the healthy people.
31. Respect, manners and politeness never go out of style.
32. Procrastination leads to regret. I try to do what I can, when I can.
33. Famous people are not to be envied or idolized. They have their struggles just like everyone else.
34. I choose to believe that the universe is on my side.
35. Whenever I can, I let go of results. I can do my best, and pray that good things will emerge. I am not in charge of outcomes.
36. Dance whenever possible.