

Life 1. Driving with Devon

Devon is a boy with autism. His biggest problem is that he reads and spells out every road sign on car trips. His parents dreaded driving with him. His annoying habit was a constant irritation – until they took a wrong turn onto a back street in Boston.

It was Devon who saved them by reciting every street they had driven through. Now Devon takes the copilot’s seat for every road trip.

Life 2. The Need to Talk

I awoke excited, looking forward to the day’s discoveries. But on the radio I heard distressing news. As it rolled around in my head, I sank deeper into the doldrums. By the time I arrived at the office my mood had become a mirror of that bleak, rainy November Monday.

Then I spoke to a colleague about the story I’d heard. He listened, nodding, silent. Immediately I felt better, less burdened. By noon, the sun had come out.

Life 5. Stay Inside the Lines

I bought a box of colored pencils for my daughter. Printed on the package was this endorsement: “Preferred by teachers.” What, I wondered, does that really mean? Why do teachers like these pencils? Do they help children color inside the lines? Have schools “approved” these colors? There was no explanation.

Say, who cares what teachers think? Teachers don’t use colored pencils; kids do. But parents buy them and *they* want to please teachers!

Life 6. The Passing Lane

Ahead of me climbing the steep mountain highway, three cars are following a very slow truck. Just ahead is a passing lane. The drivers all know this is the only passing lane for several miles. I can just imagine the tension in those cars as everyone tries to get around the lumbering truck before the passing lane ends. They are bumper to bumper at 60 mph!

Two cars pass the truck. Not me. But at the top of the hill, the truck makes a left turn onto another highway.

Learning 5. Teaching a Lesson

Carol confessed that she didn't like to cook. She recalled her Home Economics class. She was beating an egg with a fork. The teacher said, "Not so much noise. I don't want to hear any clicking when you're beating those eggs!" Now, half a lifetime later, Carol admitted, "That only made me want to do it more. And I always think of that woman whenever I beat eggs!"

How would that teacher react if she knew the only thing Carol remembers from her class is having been scolded?

Learning 6. Too Much Talk!

I was having a heart-to-heart conversation with my daughter. She was about to enter her teen years, and I knew she would benefit from my reflections of how to survive those troubling pubescent times. As I revved up for a helpful review of my main points, I looked over in her direction.

She was staring into the middle distance with glazed eyes and slouched shoulders. She'd been turned off. I'd been tuned out.

Learning 23. Dead and Alive

On a springtime walk in the woods I came upon an unusual sight. Where a grove of sugar maples had stood last summer, now there were only stumps. Though disappointed, I was curious to see that each stump was soaking wet and surrounded by a puddle of water even though it had not been raining.

Looking closer, I realized that this wasn't water. It was sap, the raw material of maple syrup! Loggers thought the tree was dead but the roots thought it was alive.

Learning 24. High Expectations

Surrounded by friends and food in a small fishing village near Bilbao, I thought this would be a perfect opportunity to improve my Spanish. But forget about speaking. I couldn't even decipher the topic of conversation! I was completely frustrated.

Then I realized: we were nine people at the table and eight were speaking simultaneously! Not to mention the three children and a loud TV in the next room. Even a native speaker couldn't keep up with all that talk. I began to relax.

Leadership 19. Turning and Changing

I ran for miles and miles beside my daughter as she learned to ride a bicycle. I was determined she would learn without ever falling down. For weeks we practiced.

Balancing her was awkward, especially when she turned away from me. But when she turned to my direction, I could support her as she leaned into the turn. And the harder she leaned, the tighter and faster the turn. So, turning a bicycle is like falling!

Leadership 20. Motivation That's Habit Forming

Everyone knows it's tough to quit smoking, but why do people start? Cigarettes have a warning label. In Europe it covers half the pack! What's the motivation to begin an activity that everyone knows will eventually kill them? No one would drink a household cleaner even though the warning label is less prominent!

Despite the obvious dangers, many people begin smoking to be cool, to be in, to be part of the group. Social belonging is one of the strongest human needs – and it crosses cultures.

Leadership 23. All Together

Imagine dining out with a group of lifelong friends – a big group – twenty-four in all! After five hours of food and highly spirited conversation up and down the long table, the woman across from you bursts into boisterous song. Shortly, the whole table is singing loud enough to rattle the windows.

This is a common experience in parts of Spain but, as a foreigner, I was worried about disturbing other restaurant patrons. Then, to my surprise, all the other diners joined in! People on the street heard us and added their voices too.

Leadership 24. Change Recipe

At cousin Donna's Thanksgiving dinner the butter is homemade. Here's the recipe: fill a jelly jar three quarters with cream, then shake, jiggle, vibrate, wobble, agitate. Keep the jar moving. Repeat. Repeat again. By now, your arms are tired, nothing has happened, and you are ready to give up. Many people do.

But with persistence, a moment comes when you feel a "thunk" and a lump of fresh butter magically replaces the liquid in your jar. Just like that!

Life Conclusions

Life 1. Driving with Devon ☼ page 1

Sometimes in a different situation a person's deficit becomes an asset.

Life 2. The Need to Talk ☼ page 1

Saying something out loud, getting it off your chest and onto the table, can change your mood. It only takes a few words to clear the air.

Life 3. Cultural Norms ☼ page 2

With enough exposure, nearly any behavior becomes "normal"; but change the circumstances, and it can become abnormal in no time.

Life 4. How Big Is Home? ☼ page 2

The farther you are from home, the bigger home becomes.

Life 5. Stay Inside the Lines ☼ page 3

It's easy to please the wrong person if you haven't thought about why you're trying to please them in the first place.

Life 6. The Passing Lane ☼ page 3

Some problems take care of themselves.

Life 7. Spreading the Word ☼ page 4

Our words (and our reputation) can spread faster than our actions!

Life 8. Enough Time ☼ page 4

Usually when we "don't have time" it's because we choose to do something else. Isn't it really about priorities?

Life 9. Being Present ☼ page 5

Even someone "in the moment" can benefit from a gentle reminder to be less preoccupied.

Life 10. Instant Friendships ☼ page 5

People want to discover something in common, but the more uncommon, the better.

Learning Conclusions

Learning 1. Turn Right to Go Left ☼ page 17

Sometimes the indirect approach is better.

Learning 2. Wasting Work Time ☼ page 17

Perhaps we ought to redefine “waste” and “work” and how we value them.

Learning 3. Looking and Finding ☼ page 18

When you are clear about what you are looking for, you begin to find it everywhere.

Learning 4. Limits ☼ page 18

How easily we allow ourselves to be affected by how far we see.

Learning 5. Teaching a Lesson ☼ page 19

Often, the littlest comments have the biggest impact!

Learning 6. Too Much Talk! ☼ page 19

Too much of a good thing had become just another lecture. Less is more.

Learning 23. Dead and Alive ☼ page 28

We are quick to make assumptions about what we cannot see!

Learning 24. High Expectations ☼ page 28

Holding ourselves to impossible standards, we miss the joy of our current successes.

Learning 25. Ask Stupid Questions ☼ page 29

When is a question really stupid?

Learning 26. Try Again ☼ page 29

Challenge yourself, make an honest effort, and people will want you to succeed.

Leadership Conclusions

Leadership 19. Turning and Changing ⌘ page 42

Eureka! To change your life direction, you have to take risks. You have to become an expert in controlled falling.

Leadership 20. Motivation That's Habit Forming ⌘ page 42

Tap into belonging and you can motivate for life!

Leadership 21. Making Changes ⌘ page 43

Thus, a simple request became a lesson in overcoming the barriers to change.

Leadership 22. No, Gracias ⌘ page 43

Clean plates may not be empty.

Leadership 23. All Together ⌘ page 44

Collaboration can be contagious!

Leadership 24. Change Recipe ⌘ page 44

To produce change, stick to it. What seems like ineffective agitation can suddenly produce the result you wanted.

Leadership 25. Lead Me, Please! ⌘ page 45

It's so easy to be a follower, even when there are opportunities to be a leader.

Leadership 26. Second Life ⌘ page 45

Let's apply Dwight's philosophy to people we'd otherwise label "broken."

Leadership 27. Pressing Matters ⌘ page 46

For your next project, work out the pressing details but be prepared for the unintended consequences.

Cultural Notes and Lexical Challenges

⌘ Life ⌘

Life 1. Driving with Devon ⌘ page 1

Cultural Note

Boston is one of the oldest cities in the United States. Over the past 380 years, it has evolved from unpaved streets suitable for foot and horse traffic to modern car, truck, train, and bus transportation. Traffic patterns have been changed without a comprehensive plan. As a result, the many one-way and restricted streets make navigation of the city confusing for outsiders.

Lexical Challenges

- autism
- to dread
- to irritate
- to recite
- a copilot

Life 2. The Need to Talk ⌘ page 1

Lexical Challenges

- to look forward to
- distressing
- the doldrums
- bleak
- blaring
- emphatically

Life 5. Stay Inside the Lines ⌘ page 3

Lexical Challenges

- an endorsement

Life 6. The Passing Lane ⌘ page 3

Cultural Note

Passing safely – Many highways through the countryside have only one lane of traffic traveling in each direction. Because of frequent curves and hills, some roadways do not have many safe places to pass slower traffic. In these instances, an additional traffic lane might be built alongside the right lane going up a hill. Slower-moving vehicles are required to use the far right lane so that those who wish to pass can use the middle lane without crossing into oncoming traffic.

Lexical Challenges

- lumbering
- bumper to bumper
- mph

⌘ Learning ⌘

Learning 5. Teaching a Lesson ⌘ page 19

Cultural Note

Home Economics – Home Economics is a course of study in many American high schools which focuses on maintaining a house and home. It can include food preparation and nutrition, sewing, and small electrical, carpentry, and plumbing repairs as well as child development and managing money.

Lexical Challenges

- Home Economics
- to beat
- to click
- to scold

Learning 6. Too Much Talk! ⌘ page 19

Lexical Challenges

- heart-to-heart
- reflections
- pubescent
- glazed eyes
- slouched
- tuned out

Learning 23. Dead and Alive ⌘ page 28

Cultural Note

Maple syrup – Maple syrup is a sweetener made from the sap of the maple tree, a deciduous hardwood that grows in the northeast United States and eastern Canada. In early spring, the sap flows up from the roots where it was stored during winter so that the tree can generate new leaves. When a small hole is drilled in the side of the tree and a metal tube is inserted, the sap can be collected and boiled to evaporate the water it contains. The resulting liquid is maple syrup, used on pancakes and in cooking and baking.

Lexical Challenges

- a grove
- sugar maples
- a stump
- soaking wet
- a puddle
- sap
- raw material
- maple syrup
- loggers

Learning 24. High Expectations ⌘ page 28

Lexical Challenges

- to decipher
- frustrated
- simultaneously
- a native speaker

⌘ Leadership ⌘

Leadership 20. Motivation That's Habit Forming ⌘ page 42

Lexical Challenges

- eventually • a household cleaner • a warning label
- prominent • obvious • to be cool • social • belonging

Leadership 21. Making Changes ⌘ page 43

Lexical Challenges

- to facilitate • a participant • ensuing chaos • to conspire
- a buddy • intact

Leadership 23. All Together ⌘ page 44

Lexical Challenges

- spirited conversation • to burst into song • boisterous
- to rattle

Leadership 24. Change Recipe ⌘ page 44

Cultural Note

Thanksgiving – Thanksgiving is a holiday celebrated on the last Thursday in November in the U.S. and on the second Monday of October in Canada. In the U.S., the holiday commemorates the first year of survival of the Pilgrims when they were new immigrants to North America. After a difficult winter and trouble adjusting to a new environment, the early settlers received help from the Native Americans, who taught them new methods of planting, harvesting, and fishing. The Pilgrims set aside a time to feast, celebrate, and give thanks. Today, families gather and prepare a large banquet to celebrate Thanksgiving.

Lexical Challenges

- homemade • a recipe • a jelly jar • to jiggle
- to vibrate • to wobble • to agitate • to give up
- persistence • a lump • magically