

Sixty True Things by Gordon Livingston, M.D.

You can view and purchase the books at <http://tinyurl.com/ym55x3>

1. If the map doesn't agree with the ground, the map is wrong.
2. If we have useful work, sustaining relationships and the promise of pleasure, it is hard to be unhappy.
3. The motivations and habit patterns that underlie most of our behaviour are seldom logical; we are much more often driven by impulses, preconceptions and emotions of which we are only dimly aware.
4. Change is the essence of life. My favorite therapeutic question is "What's next?". The question implies both a willingness to change and the power to do so.
5. While it takes two people to create a relationship, it takes only one to end it. The chances of marriage enduring are no better than fifty-fifty. What makes you think that you will win the coin flip?
6. In an effort to destigmatize genuine mental illness, we have created a plethora of diagnoses that are really just descriptions of certain patterns of behaviour.
7. Be bold and mighty forces will come to your aid.
8. The paradox of perfection: in some settings, notably in our intimate relationships, we gain control only by relinquishing it.
9. Life's two most important questions are "Why?" and "Why not?". The trick is knowing which one to ask.
10. This is the final and controlling paradox: Only by embracing our mortality can we be happy in the time we have.
11. The most secure prisons are those we construct for ourselves.
12. I believe that parenthood, a voluntary commitment, does not incur a reciprocal obligation in the young. It is a primary task of parents throughout their lives to convey to the young a sense of optimism.
13. Our feelings depend mainly on our interpretation of what is happening to us and around us. It is not so much what occurs but how we define events and respond that determines how we feel.
14. It seems ironic that when people fall in love, no justification for their attachment is necessary. When, on the other hand, people fall *out* of love, the demands for an explanation are insistent.
15. The process of building has always been slower and more complicated than that of destruction. If we believe in the sudden transformation, the big score, we are less likely to pursue the harder and less immediately satisfying work of becoming the people we wish to be.
16. There are no maps to guide our most important searches; we must rely on... intuition, and a willingness to be surprised.
17. What gives love its power is that it is shared.
18. Nearly every human action is in some way an expression of how we think about ourselves.... this criterion can be applied to any important life decision: How will this make me feel about myself?
19. We flee from the truth in vain.
20. Lying to ourselves disables us entirely from making needed changes. It is when our dream of what we could be collides with the truth of what we are that the clang of cognitive dissonance both deafens and blinds us.
21. A healthy process of maturation allows us to internalize a belief that we

- are uniquely valuable, and gives us a stable sense of a lovable self.
22. There is no way around grief; you just have to go through it.
23. The primary goal of parenting, beyond keeping our children safe and loved, is to convey to them a sense that it is possible to be happy in an uncertain world... We do this, of course, by example more than by anything we say to them.
24. The major advantage of illness is that it provides relief from responsibility. Any behavior that is reinforced will continue; behavior that is not will extinguish. It is just hard sometimes to discern what that reinforcement might be.
25. The list of fears that people carry with them is long and varied, and a function of the information with which we are bombarded. Learn to savor the moments of pleasure with an unwillingness to let the present moment be drained of joy by fear of the future or regret of the past.
26. Parents can try to teach the values and behaviors that they have found to be important... What we say pales in comparison with what our children see us do.
27. Memory... is a story we tell ourselves about the past. What we remember and how we remember are affected by the meaning of events to us. We might concede that holding on to a romanticised version [*of the past, or future!*] is just another way of sabotaging the present.
28. With all due respect to the concept of ambivalence, people find it hard to entertain two emotions simultaneously. Long before the advent of modern medicine, faith healers of various descriptions mobilized people's attitudes to combat disease.
29. The more choices we are able to exercise, the happier we are likely to be. Choices may be limited... most often by the many ways we restrict ourselves. Is it anxiety or lack of imagination that restricts us?
30. Widely confused with forgetting or reconciliation, forgiveness is neither. It is not something we do for others; it is a gift to ourselves. Some form of forgiveness is the end point of grieving.
31. Nobody gets out of here alive. Whether this reality is a reason for despair or an incentive to mobilize the courage required to get up each morning is a matter of attitude. This is where we have a choice.
32. Much of what we think we know is untrue.
33. Forgiveness is a gift we give ourselves.
34. If we choose a partner with ample reserves of kindness and a willingness to place us at the center of his or her life, *and* if we have sufficiently cultivated those virtues in ourselves, we can refute the "hard work" school of marriage...and partake of the endless pleasures of renewable love.
35. If an agreement can be reached to withhold criticism, the emotional tone of the household shifts... What is eliminated are the passive-aggressive behaviours that represent the defensive responses of people who feel powerless and aggrieved. *Kindness begets kindness.*
36. Action is eloquence.
37. It is better to be spent than saved... I prefer to challenge people to relinquish passivity, stop waiting for answers outside themselves, mobilize their courage and determination, and try to discover what changes will bring them closer to others and to the people they want to be.
38. If you have something to say, say it now, for the eternal silence is at

hand.

39. We are defined by what we fear.

40. The best stepparents do the least parenting.

41. One of life's most difficult tasks is to see ourselves as others see us.

42. The spirit of democracy rests on the conviction that no one has a corner on the truth. We are all fallible human beings, struggling to create a world in which we respect the right of others to frame their own beliefs about life's large questions in the way that seems best to them.

43. Relinquish dignity last.

44. Though much is taken, much abides. (Quote:
<http://www.mrbolcar.com/Ulysses.html>)

45. The important questions are unanswerable. It is only when we are too obtuse, frightened, or distracted to ask the important questions that we are truly lost.

46. Attachment is the source of all suffering.

47. Life teaches us over and over that everything is connected. Our shared fate in this lifeboat we call Earth depends on our stewardship of the world that is our inheritance.

48. You can change who you are without rejecting who you were.

49. ...we might do well to cultivate a certain humility about our particular conception of what constitutes an ethical life and be willing to accept those who peacefully disagree with us.

50. We have a need to see ourselves reflected in the eyes of someone who regards us as an indispensable part of his or her life. What we seek is unconditional love.

51. Political beliefs exist not just on a continuum but on a sort of circle where the extremists at either end are more like each other than they are like those in the middle.

52. If we cannot learn, we become little more than a collection of unexamined habits, subject to the mindless repetition of past mistakes.

53. Whether our lives are happy or sad, satisfying or not, is, in large measure, determined by what we choose to pay attention to...Most of what we fear is a reaction to what we see on our television screens.

54. We need examples of genuine heroes to give us models for good behavior...We are in desperate need of the real thing, so we ought to be careful who we choose.

55. We are all capable of anything. *[This is a powerful chapter to read if you make the opportunity]*

56. If we have never been able to refine and modify our views in response to new information, we are unlikely in our old age to acquire this habit or to have a better basis for what we 'know' than when we were in our younger days.

57. Happiness requires an ability to tolerate uncertainty.

58. As we grow old, the beauty steals inward.

59. Every snowflake in an avalanche pleads not guilty.

60. Most people die with their music still in them..."He not busy being born is busy dying," Bob Dylan said.