

**EXCELLENT
ADVICE
FOR
LIVING
WISDOM I WISH
I'D KNOWN EARLIER
KEVIN
KELLY**

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF THE INEVITABLE

ALSO BY KEVIN KELLY

Out of Control: The New Biology of Machines, Social Systems and the Economic World

New Rules for the New Economy: 10 Radical Strategies for a Connected World

What Technology Wants

Cool Tools: A Catalog of Possibilities

The Silver Cord: A Graphic Novel

The Inevitable: Understanding the 12 Technological Forces That Will Shape Our Future

Vanishing Asia



Excellent Advice
for Living

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*Wisdom I Wish I'd
Known Earlier*

—••—
KEVIN KELLY

Viking

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Some of the advice in this book previously appeared on the author's blog, *The Technium* (kk.org/thetechnium).

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Dedication

Excellent Advice for Living

Acknowledgments

About the Author

*Most of all, for my children:
Kaileen, Ting, and Tywen*

On my sixty-eighth birthday, I decided to give my young adult children some advice. I am not a frequent advice giver but soon I was able to write down 68 bits. To my surprise, I had more to say than I thought. So for the next several years I wrote down a batch of advice on my birthday, and shared it with my family and friends. They wanted more. I kept going until I had about 450 bits of advice I wished I'd known when I was younger.

I am primarily channeling the wisdom of the ages. I am offering advice I have heard from others, or timeless knowledge repeated from the past, or a modern aphorism that matched my own experience. I doubt any of it is truly original, although I have tried to put everything in my own words. I think of these bits as seeds because each one of them could easily be expanded into a long essay. Indeed, I have spent most of my time writing by compressing these substantial lessons into as compact and tweetable forms as possible. You are encouraged to expand these seeds as you read to fill your own situation.

If you find these proverbs align with your experience, share them with someone younger than yourself.

—Kevin Kelly, *Pacifica, California, 2023*

Learn how to learn
from those you disagree with
or even offend you.
See if you can find
the truth in what they believe.



Being enthusiastic
is worth 25 IQ points.



Listening well is a superpower.
While listening to someone you love
keep asking them
“Is there more?”
until there is no more.

Always demand a deadline
because it weeds out
the extraneous and the ordinary.
A deadline prevents you from trying
to make it perfect
so you have to make it different.
Different is better.



Don't be afraid
to ask a question
that may sound stupid
because 99% of the time
everyone else is thinking
of the same question
and is too embarrassed to ask it.

Prototype your life.
Try stuff instead of making grand plans.



When you forgive others
they may not notice
but you will heal.
Forgiveness is not something
we do for others;
it is a gift to ourselves.

The fact that you “can’t do” something
can be embarrassing.
But if you are “learning to do” something
that is admirable.
There are only tiny baby steps
between can’t and learning.



Don't measure your life
with someone else's ruler.

When someone tells you
what ticks them off
they are telling you
what makes them tick.



Collecting things benefits you
only if you display your collection
prominently
and share it in joy with others.
The opposite of this is hoarding.

Taking a break
is not a sign of weakness
but a sign of strength.



A major part of travel
is to leave stuff behind.
The more you leave behind
the further you will advance.



You don't have to attend
every argument you are invited to.

A worthy goal for a year
is to learn enough about a subject
so that you can't believe
how ignorant you were
a year earlier.



You can't reason
someone out of a notion
that they didn't reason themselves into.



Gratitude will unlock all other virtues
and is something you can get better at.

When you are anxious
because of your to-do list
take comfort in your have-done list.



Treating a person to a meal never fails
and is so easy to do.
It's powerful with old friends
and a great way to make new friends.



Pain is inevitable. Suffering is optional.

If you are looking
for something in your house
and you finally find it
when you're done with it
don't put it back where you found it.
Put it back
where you first looked for it.



Movement plus variety equals health.

Never use a credit card for credit.
The only kind of credit, or debt
that is acceptable
is debt to acquire something
whose exchange value
is extremely likely to increase
like a home.
The exchange value of most things
diminishes
or vanishes the moment
you purchase them.
Don't be in debt to losers.



A great way to understand yourself
is to seriously reflect on everything
you find irritating in others.

The advantage
of a ridiculously ambitious goal
is that it sets the bar very high
so even if your effort falls short
it may exceed an ordinary success.



When you give away 10% of your income
you lose 10% of your purchasing power
which is minor compared to the
110% increase in happiness you will gain.

The best way to learn anything
is to try to teach what you know.



Whenever you have a choice between
being right or being kind
be kind. No exceptions.
Don't confuse kindness with weakness.



We lack rites of passage.
Create a memorable family ceremony
when your child reaches legal adulthood
between eighteen and twenty-one.
This moment will become
a significant touchstone in their life.

The best way to get to yes in a negotiation
is to truly understand
what yes means for the other party.



Recipe for greatness:
Become just a teeny bit better
than you were last year.
Repeat every year.



Draw to discover what you see.
Write to discover what you think.