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The Uptrends We Never See

Many of us suspect that the world is getting worse over the long term. In the U.S., only 4% of respondents will tell you that our world living conditions are improving. However, the website “Our World in Data” (<https://ourworldindata.org/a-history-of-global-living-conditions-in-5-charts/>) has posted some charts that might change your mind. Looking back over the long-term, it finds that we’re living at the very peak of world living conditions. And the trend still seems to be upward.

The world is actually in a better place than we have ever had it. There is not a single metric that you can pick that we are not dramatically better than we were in the past. Two hundred years ago, 94% of the world lived in extreme poverty. We are down below 10% today. Infant mortality is down 99% in the last 100 years. Maternal mortality, same thing. The cost of electricity, transportation, telecommunications, all pretty close to zero. We have extraordinary progress today, but you will not see this in the news.

We all have in the back of our brain this little organ that is constantly scanning for bad news and it is purely the product of our evolutionary history. Research has shown that we are actually ten times more likely to listen to bad news than we are to listen to good news. This is why Fox News has been very successful and CNN is called the Crisis News Network, because you can watch every piece of bad news in high def and in real time.

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The Uptrends We Never See

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There are a dazzling array of technological innovations that are coming to in the next 10 to 15 years - and these innovations are going to fundamentally change our society almost faster than we can react. If we take a longer-term perspective than, say, the past year or last quarter's earnings reports, we begin to see that all the time, energy and labor that all of us are putting in every day to improve the world are actually paying off with substantial, if sometimes incremental, results. Other charts show that we're healthier, better-educated and better off than our ancestors.

Can we can keep it up? The trends say we will.



CANARY FOUNDATION

You may recall that Meritas made a donation to **The Canary Foundation** last fall. Let us take this opportunity to tell you more about this important organization. The Canary Foundation is the world's first non-profit organization dedicated solely to the funding, discovery, and development of tests for early cancer detection. The Canary Foundation was founded in 2004 by Don Listwin. After he lost his mother to misdiagnosed ovarian cancer, he envisioned a world of simple and safe tests that could identify and isolate cancer at its earliest, most curable stage.

Today, more than 10 years later, **The Canary Foundation** has raised more than \$64 million to support early detection research, and has funded more than 38 research projects at 24 institutions including two international sites. Cancer has touched so many of us and Meritas is proud to support **The Canary Foundation** and its efforts to cure this devastating disease.

<http://www.canaryfoundation.org/>

Reminder to Send Documents Securely Over the Internet

As tax season is upon us, we just wanted to give a friendly reminder to our clients that it is very important to use secure methods when sending sensitive information over the Internet. Meritas uses a program called ShareFile that allows us to send and receive personal information securely. If you need to send us a document, please ask us to send you a link where you can safely and easily upload it and send it to us electronically.

SMART Goals are Not Always Wise

Many of us have been taught about setting goals through the use of the SMART acronym. The theory is that in order to be successful in our pursuits, our goals must be:

Specific
Measurable
Attainable
Realistic
Tangible

“Goals that resonate with what is most important to you will keep you motivated and bring joy to your journey as you move toward your objectives.”

But for many, this template for goal setting is rigid and uninspiring. It puts the concept of planning and achievement in a linear framework that appeals only to the rational side of our brains.

Our goals then become a list of “shoulds” that require us to be disciplined and methodical in order to reach our objectives.

As an alternative, substitute words for the SMART acronym that speak to you on an emotional level. Here is an example:

Significant
Meaningful
Attracting
Rewarding
Timely

Using this framework is more likely to result in a planning process that is successful and satisfying.

Significant—Goals that resonate with what is most important to you will keep you motivated and bring joy to your journey as you move toward your objectives.

Meaningful—Oftentimes individuals set goals based on what others—parents, employers, teachers, society view as important. To be truly inspiring and satisfying, your goals must align with your own values and priorities. Only then will your goals be yours!

Attracting—When your goals are both significant and meaningful to you, they will create a positive image that will draw you toward that which you want to experience and achieve. You won’t have to rely on pure grit and determination to achieve your goals, but rather the clear vision of what you want in your life will focus your intention and guide your decisions on a day to day basis.

Rewarding—Sometimes we don’t make progress toward our goals because, consciously or subconsciously, we are still weighing the costs and benefits of making this commitment. An honest appraisal of this inner conflict can bring clarity to the goal setting process. We are more likely to move toward goals that bring us a clear sense of reward along the journey as well as reaching the destination.

Timely—Do you have the time required to commit to a specific goal? In embarking on this journey, is the timing right for you? In considering these questions, it is important to realize that some goals should have specific target dates and others should not.

By imposing deadlines, we can create stress that stifles our ability to overcome obstacles in creative ways. In addition, deadlines tend to cause us to set goals that are within our current reality. More open-ended goals encourage us to “dream big”—to stretch our imaginations and indulge in possibility thinking.

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WHAT WE LOVE RIGHT NOW

Roasted Cauliflower
375 F. oven. Cut bite size, drizzle with olive oil., S&P to taste . Roast 30 minutes, turning once for caramelized yumminess.

In the winter, one doesn't usually think of having ice cream, but if you are a lover of this delicious dessert, it is a very good time to check out Fairfax Scoop, as the lines are *much* shorter in the cold season!



Hook & Ladder
2012 Estate
Zinfandel
Russian River
Valley



The podcast "Criminal". Each short episode offers a captivating story about different crimes in our society and those affected by it. <http://thisiscriminal.com/>

A fascinating 3 ½ minute fly-through of 17th century London before The Great Fire. <http://journalofdigitalhumanities.org/3-1/pudding-lane-recreating-seventeenth-century-london/>



The amazing smell of the daphne bush outside my window. When it blooms you know that spring is on its way.

