

Desiderata

Go placidly amid the noise and the haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence. As far as possible without surrender be on good terms with all persons. Speak your truth quietly and clearly; and listen to others, even to the dull and the ignorant, they too have their story. Avoid loud and aggressive persons, they are vexations to the spirit.



If you compare yourself with others, you may become vain or bitter; for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself. Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans. Keep interested in your own career, however humble; it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time.



Exercise caution in your business affairs, for the world is full of trickery. But let not this blind you to what virtue there is; many persons strive for high ideals, and everywhere life is full of heroism. Be yourself. Especially do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love; for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment it is as perennial as the grass. Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth.



Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. But do not distress yourself with dark imaginings. Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness. Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself. You are a child of the universe, no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here. And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should.



Therefore, be at peace with God, whatever you conceive Him to be. And whatever your labors and aspirations in the noisy confusion of life, keep peace in your soul. With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams; it is still a beautiful world. Be cheerful.



Strive to be happy.

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A Brief History of Desiderata

Desiderata is Latin and means 'things that are yearned for'. It was written by Max Ehrmann who originally copyrighted it on 3rd January 1927 as 'Go Placidly Amid The Noise And Haste'.

Nevertheless, its true origin was earlier confused when a copy of the poem was found on Democratic politician Adlai Stevenson's bedside table after his death in 1965 – The version was linked to The Old St Paul's Church and seemed to date back to a time before 1692. This was because it had been included in a book of inspirational works published by the Vicar of The Old St John's Church which was built in that year.

Inspired by a Desiderata poster, singer Les Crane used the words in his 1971 hit pop record, for which he received a Grammy award for the 'best spoken word recording'. Les Crane apparently saw the poem on a poster and believed the words to be in the public domain, but then finally had to share his royalties with, the then, copyright owners.

Max Ehrmann was born of German immigrant parents in Indiana, in September 1872. After graduating from university in 1894 he studied law and philosophy at Harvard University. It has been reported that Desiderata was inspired by an urge that Ehrmann wrote about in his diary saying; "I should like, if I could, to leave a humble gift - a bit of chaste prose that had caught up some noble moods."

Ehrmann wrote many poems, although none became well known until after his death. Aside from Desiderata his most famous poem is "A Prayer", written in 1906. He included Desiderata in a Christmas message to his friends in 1933, but did not mention that it was under copyright. This further added to the confusion over the issue of copyright.

Max married Bertha King Scott, from New York, three months before his death in 1945. Three months after his death she published four of his books and then, in 1948, published Desiderata along with some of his other works in a collection titled The Poems Of Max Ehrmann. She re-renewed the Desiderata copyright in 1948 and 1954.

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