

## SIMPLE WORDS THAT CAN LIGHTEN SOMEONE'S LOAD

### *What Tough Times and Tough Jobs Taught Me About Lifting Others Up*

Encouragement. Sept. 12 marks National Day of Encouragement, and while it's a word that gets tossed around a lot, it means something different to me. I'll admit, positive thinking doesn't exactly come easily for me. I tend to wake up most mornings feeling like a vulture is circling overhead or some dark cloud is looming nearby. I guess that's just the residue of growing up with parents who regularly engaged in alcohol-fueled fights. I spent much of my younger years trying to keep the peace, doing everything possible to avoid rocking the boat. But somewhere along the way, what started as people-pleasing became something far more meaningful: **a genuine appreciation for the power of encouragement.**

The neighborhood I grew up in was a small, tight-knit community where everyone worked hard, struggled to make ends meet, and leaned on one another when life got tough. My parents worked themselves to the bone, and I remember watching neighbors do the same. Those early years left a lasting impression on me. I saw how far a little kindness could go. Simple encouragement, **just a word, a nod, or someone really listening**, could be a lifeline for folks just trying to get through the week. That's stuck with me.

Encouragement, to me, isn't about superficial optimism. It's about making people feel heard and seen. In today's world, people are lonelier than ever. There's something powerful in simply listening, *really listening*, to someone. Looking

them in the eye, asking how they're doing, letting them share their worries without judgment or interruption. It's a lost art that has made a huge difference in my life, both personally and professionally.

I try to bring that mindset into my daily life. Whether it's the folks I see at the drive-through, the guys at the bank and barber shop, or the servers at the diner where my wife and I eat, I make it a point to talk with them. Ask about their families. Remember their stories. A few weeks ago, the manager at my local McDonald's had a bad fall off a scooter and gashed her head pretty badly. I've had my share of scars, so I picked up some scar cream for her and dropped it off at the window the next time I went through. Simple gestures like that? *They matter.* People remember kindness, especially when in the midst of a rough patch.

And in my work, encouragement means everything. Workers' comp cases aren't just legal files; they're about people going through very tough times. They're injured, stressed, and often scared about what's next. When the process doesn't go as we hope, it really hurts. I feel it too. I've put my heart into cases only to face a tough loss, questioning what I could have done

differently. But at the end of the day, my job isn't just about winning cases; it's about showing my clients they're not alone. Telling them, **"We'll figure this out together."** Helping them breathe a little easier.



I've been on the receiving end of encouragement, too. Years ago, when I went through my divorce (a life event I never imagined would happen), I felt utterly lost. But a mentor of mine, a guy who'd been through it himself, told me, "You're in the middle of hell right now, but you'll

get through it, even if you can't see how." He didn't sugarcoat it. He just sat with me. That was exactly what I needed.

Encouragement isn't about fixing everything. **It's about showing up, listening, and offering kindness without strings attached.** I've learned that those small acts of encouragement, whether it's listening to a client, chatting with a cashier, or picking up the phone to check in on someone, have a funny way of lifting my own spirits, too. Life can feel pretty heavy sometimes. But even on the darkest days, a little encouragement can remind us we're not walking through it alone.

*-Jim Monast*

# OUTWIT EXPENSES ON ONE INCOME

## SAVE MORE WITHOUT EARNING MORE

If you're rocking a one-income lifestyle, you know every penny has a part to play. The good news? With a few smart strategies and some creative hustle, you can stretch your dollars and live abundantly with what you've got.

### GET COZY WITH YOUR BUDGET.

Think of your budget like a team; every cent is a player. If one's just standing around doing nothing (*we're looking at you, random subscription services*), it's time to cut them from the roster. Start tracking where your money goes, even the tiny stuff. Those impulse coffee runs and late-night Amazon scrolls add up more than you think!

### DECLUTTER AND CASH IN.

Do you have duplicate pantry items, forgotten batteries, and a mystery Tupperware you keep buying duplicates of? It's time to take control. Clean out, organize, and sell what you don't need while you're at it! A little tidying can go a long way toward a cleaner home and a fatter wallet.

### BE A SAVVY SHOPPER.

Loyalty is great ... except when it costs you. Revisit your utility bills, internet plan, insurance, and other regular expenses. A few phone calls can lead to serious savings, and hey, who doesn't love a good deal?

### TRY A NO-SPEND WEEKEND.

Want to hit the reset button on your spending habits? Challenge yourself to a no-spend weekend. No takeout, no spur-of-the-moment Target trips, no extras. It's eye-opening to discover how resourceful you can be when you give your wallet a break. If you feel extra motivated, try a no-spend week and watch your wallet rejoice.

### HOME HACKS THAT SAVE.

A few clever tweaks can quietly cut costs and make your home more efficient. Start with your water heater; most are set far higher than necessary. Dropping the temperature can

reduce energy use, lower your bill, and help prevent scalding accidents, especially if you have kids.

Laundry is another area where tiny changes add up. Tossing a clean, dry towel into a wet load can help soak up moisture and reduce drying time, while wool dryer balls cut energy use and replace costly dryer sheets.

### DIVIDE AND CONQUER BIG BILLS.

Big monthly expenses got you stressed? Try the half-payment method: *Divide larger bills into smaller chunks and save up with every paycheck.* It's way less painful than facing one massive payment all at once.

Living on one income doesn't mean living without comfort. It means getting clever, and everyone can be up for the challenge.

# School Isn't Always Safe

## HERE'S WHAT EVERY SCHOOL EMPLOYEE NEEDS TO KNOW

When you think about school injuries, students might come to mind first, whether on the playground or football field. However, teachers and school staff face plenty of risks too. From slips in the hallway to breaking up a fight, your job isn't always as safe as it seems. Whether you're teaching in the classroom, serving lunch, or driving the bus, school jobs have their fair share of hazards.

### SCHOOL JOBS COME WITH REAL RISKS.

Schools aren't as risk-free as they appear. Injuries can happen in the blink of an eye:

- A quick trip down the stairs or a slip in the hallway
- Lifting heavy boxes or equipment
- Repetitive stress from grading papers or typing all day
- Emotional stress from high-pressure situations

- Even exposure to harmful substances like cleaning chemicals or mold

And sadly, **school violence is a growing concern.** Whether it's breaking up a fight or being caught in a more serious incident, these injuries can take a substantial physical and emotional toll.

### NO ROLE IS WITHOUT RISK.

Every school employee faces unique challenges. Science teachers may deal with chemical burns, while gym teachers face sprains or torn ligaments. Counselors and mental health staff often battle stress and burnout. Even office staff can develop back or wrist pain from desk work. The truth is that injuries don't discriminate based on your job title.

### YOU DESERVE PROTECTION.

If you're injured on the job, workers' compensation may cover medical treatment

and lost wages. If a student assaulted you, you may even be entitled to paid assault leave under Ohio law. Whether you're a teacher, bus driver, lunch server, or custodian, you deserve care and support after an injury.

**Reporting your injury quickly is key.** Tell your supervisor or HR rep as soon as possible, and get medical attention immediately.

### WE'RE HERE TO HELP.

If you're unsure where to start, don't worry, you're not alone. We're here to guide you through the process and fight for the benefits you deserve.

Injuries at school aren't just "part of the job." They're serious, and we're ready to help. Contact us today to explore your options and protect your future.

# THE RIPPLE EFFECT OF SAYING NO TO PLASTIC

## HOW SIMPLE SHIFTS ARE RESCUING OUR OCEANS

Something refreshing is happening along our coastlines, and it's not just the salty sea breeze. Thanks to local policies across the country, beachgoers are now enjoying cleaner shores, and science is backing up this progress.

Recent research indicates that areas implementing plastic bag bans or fees are experiencing significant improvements in shoreline cleanliness. **Scientists have observed up to a 47% reduction in litter along coastlines where these policies are enforced.** That's nearly half of the trash eliminated!

This isn't just a one-time fluke either. The reductions have persisted and even increased over time. Researchers from the University of Delaware and Columbia University analyzed data from tens of thousands of beach cleanups and compared it to local laws across towns, counties, and states. What they found was clear: *The more severe the plastic bag problem was initially, the more effective the cleanup impact of bans or fees.*

This is important. **While most plastic bags are used for only about 12 minutes, their environmental impact can last up to 1,000 years.** The ocean bears the brunt of this. Once plastic enters the water, it doesn't disappear;

instead, it breaks down into tiny, toxic particles. These pieces can outnumber plankton six to one, acting like sponges that absorb harmful chemicals such as PCBs and DDT at levels millions of times higher than the surrounding seawater. What's the consequence? A food chain caught up in toxic waste.



Wildlife bears the worst impact. Sea turtles, mistaking bags for jellyfish, swallow them with deadly outcomes. Other species, from puffins and seals to whales and dolphins, are found with stomachs and airways blocked by plastic debris, especially bags. These silent killers are among the leading threats to marine life today.

But change is achievable, and it's happening. It's an encouraging sign in the fight against plastic pollution. **By reducing the use of single-use bags, these local laws are shifting shopper habits and helping preserve the natural beauty and delicate balance of our oceans.**

So the next time you pack a reusable tote for a grocery run or stash a foldable bag in your car, know this: You're not just making a smart choice for your convenience, you're part of a much bigger ripple effect that's making beaches brighter and the planet a little lighter. *Now that's a change worth celebrating.*

## SUDOKU

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ANSWER



EATS WITH ELLIE

## GRILLED TERIYAKI FLANK STEAK

### INGREDIENTS

#### Marinade

- 2/3 cup red wine
- 1/2 cup soy sauce or tamari
- 1/3 cup brown sugar
- 1/4 cup sesame oil
- 1 tbsp sesame seeds

- 1 tsp minced garlic
- 1/4 tsp black pepper
- 1/4 tsp ginger powder
- 1/4 tsp red pepper flakes (optional)

#### Meat

- 1 1/2 lbs flank steak

### DIRECTIONS

1. In a large bowl, whisk together marinade ingredients.
2. Place the flank steak in a large, rimmed dish. Pour the marinade over the meat.
3. Refrigerate and allow to marinate for 15 minutes. Flip and let marinate for another 15 minutes.
4. Preheat grill to 400 F.
5. Add the meat to the grill and cook for 3–5 minutes on each side. Leave the grill lid open to avoid overcooking.
6. For a medium-rare steak, remove from grill at 130 F internally, and for medium, remove at 140 F.
7. Let the meat rest on a cutting board for 5–10 minutes. Then, slice against the grain into thin pieces and enjoy!

Inspired by TheShortOrderCook.com

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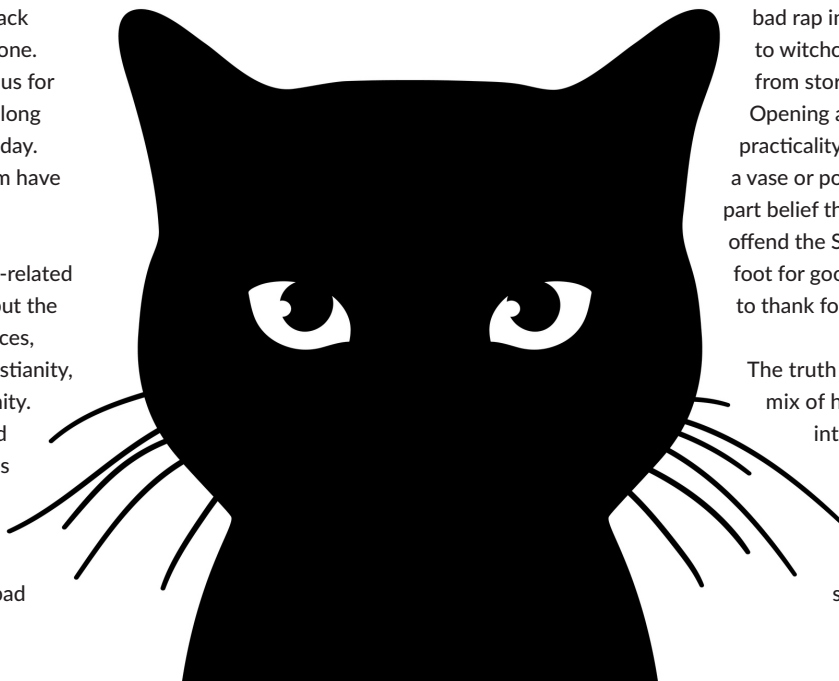
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# FROM LADDERS TO BLACK CATS

## THE QUIRKY WORLD OF SUPERSTITIONS

Ever caught yourself short after walking under a ladder or cringed when a black cat crossed your path? You're not alone. These superstitions have been with us for centuries, and they're just two on a long list of many that people still have today. While some may feel silly, all of them have fascinating origin stories.

Of course, there's a practical, safety-related reason not to walk under a ladder, but the superstition comes from several places, including Christian tradition. In Christianity, the triangle represents the Holy Trinity. Walking through the triangle formed by a ladder was seen as breaking this perfect unity. Ladders were also associated with the gallows in medieval times. Walking under one was thought to bring death or bad luck — nobody wanted that energy.



What about the black cat thing? They got a bad rap in medieval Europe and were tied to witchcraft. The number 13? That came from stories of betrayal and misfortune. Opening an umbrella indoors? That's part practicality — no one wants to knock over a vase or poke someone in the eye — and part belief that opening them indoors would offend the Sun God. Do you carry a rabbit's foot for good luck? You have Celtic folklore to thank for that one.

The truth is that all superstitions are a mix of history, fear, and habit rolled into stuff we still believe and do without thinking. So, the next time you say "bless you" after a sneeze, remember you're protecting souls one snuffle at a time.