



# A Letter to My Kids

LESSONS FROM A LIFE  
WELL-LIVED

BY HELEN ANDREOLI

**Next to loving you unconditionally, I think my primary job as your parent has been to provide you, to the best of my ability, with the tools and practical knowledge you will need to make it out in the world. I'm not talking about just the typical stuff - how to do your laundry or the right amount to tip on a dinner check, as important as these items are - but how to live your life in a way that is fulfilling and enjoyable. I have known people who I suspect will, one day, look back and wish they had done things differently. I don't want that for you, so here is some wisdom to help you live a life you love.**

## we are all headed to the same STOP sign

A STOP sign is an analogy for life that I think about often. Imagine that we are all driving down different roads in life, but they all end at the same STOP sign. The speed at which we get there may be different and the roads we choose may vary greatly, but when we get there, we all do the same thing. We STOP. It does not matter what we have accumulated along the way. Everybody STOPS. It does not matter how educated we are or what size house we lived in. We just STOP.

If the stop sign is the same for each of us, then what does matter? It is what happens along the way that makes life worthwhile, the experience. Where did our journey take us? Who traveled with us? Did we act in a way that made people want to get in the car and ride with us? Or did the car remain empty of passengers?

So, in short, be a good driver. Stop the car for somebody who deserves a lift. Kick out a passenger who does not deserve your company. Sometimes, take the scenic route. The fastest trip isn't always the most fun. Play good music (with singing preferable in my car), make great stories and, above all, enjoy the ride.

## life is too important to be taken seriously

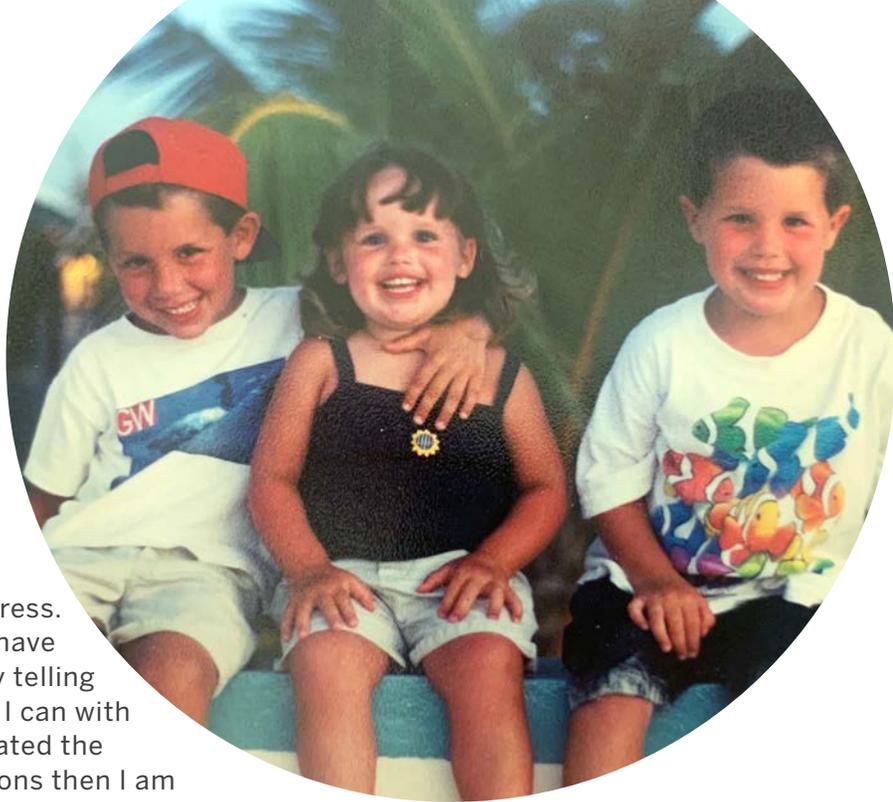
I'd like to take credit for this gem, but I can't. Oscar Wilde said this and he must have been brilliant because this perfectly sums up how I feel about life. I am not suggesting that you drop out of college and join the Circus. I don't think you should be irresponsible and lazy at school or in your job.

Always remember that responsibility and humor are not mutually exclusive. I have always prided myself on being a hard worker whether at school, at home or in the workplace. But, I have also always tried to make those places and those jobs fun.

Remember at Sydney's graduation when I fell walking across the parking lot? It was a slow motion, in front of the whole school, bag and camera flying, flat on your face in a dress kind of fall. Sydney helped me gather my things, made sure I was okay and then asked "Now can I laugh?"

Absolutely. We laughed all the way home because it was hilarious. Find the fun and the humor in life in all that you do and in all that happens. Find a way to make people laugh and smile. And, for heaven's sake, find a way to laugh at yourself.

# do the best you can with the information you have today



Stress is a real problem. Trust me, there will be plenty of it along the way that you can't control. At some point you will likely have to find a place to live, choose which job to take, decide whether or not to stay in a relationship and/or figure out if you want to have kids. All of these questions can come with a great deal of stress. What is the right answer? How do you decide? I have learned to cut myself some slack and I do this by telling myself this simple rule. I make the best decision I can with the best information I have today. If I have evaluated the alternatives thoughtfully and considered all options then I am ready to make a decision. If new information comes up tomorrow that impacts the decision, I will reevaluate then and make a new decision based on the best information at hand.

Don't beat yourself up about the initial decision, just do your best. Which leads me to my final point...

## no regrats.

No, kids, it's not a typo. Remember the movie "We're the Millers"? Now you get it. The point is live your life with no regrets. As I mentioned before, I know people who I think have many regrets about their life. I think that is a really sad and burdensome piece of luggage to carry around. My definition of a successful life would be me pulling up to that STOP sign and looking back at my life and thinking, "Wow, that was an amazing ride. I had a great job and many wonderful friends. I spent most of my life with a man I loved deeply. I spent a whole lot of time with my kids and we did some really amazing things. I know that they really loved me and learned a lot from me and, most importantly, they know how much they were loved."

**I have no regrats you little nuggets.**



*Helen is a Founding Partner and the Chief Financial Officer at Great Diamond Partners.*

*Reach her at 207.274.2505 or  
handreoli@greatdiamondpartners.com*