

# 2009 PROMISES

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## *Carpe Diem*

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By Dr. Keith M. Eigel, PhD

2009 promises to be, if nothing else, an interesting year for most of us. As a nation, and now what appears to be globally, we find ourselves in quite a mess. The banking crisis, the real estate crash, the indebtedness of our government and our people, a “let me get mine” mentality, have all contributed to what promises to be the most challenging slump in our economy since the Great Depression.

We will understand the causes a decade or more from now when the historians have “hind-sight” access to the records and decisions that have led to the circumstances that we now find ourselves living in. This may not sound helpful, but it is true. So let’s focus on what we have control over, not just what we can worry about. Therein lies the silver lining in our current cloud.

There is a great quote, attributed to Albert Einstein that has been so overused as to become trite: “Today’s problems cannot be solved at the same level of thinking at which they were created.” This resonates with us because we have an intuitive sense that it is correct, but if pressed, most of us couldn’t tell you exactly why we believe it to be so. Is it creativity that’s needed, or a different solution, or a different angle? Sometimes it is. However, I believe his quote means that the problems we face challenge us to a categorically different level of understanding, and it is in this new understanding that the answer to our problems can be found. We don’t solve our problems, our problems solve us.

Why don’t the problems of our past seem like such a big deal anymore? The tensions that we had on the playground in middle school don’t still consume our every waking hour. The heartache of our first love lost in high school or college doesn’t still leave us wondering if we will ever love again. The pit we felt in our stomach when our first boss gave us feedback on a weakness doesn’t still keep us up

at night. We didn't just learn the solutions to these crises, like the answer to a math problem, and once applied they went away. These were not problems to be solved; they were problems to solve us.

Experiencing the challenge of facing our problems is, in fact, how we develop. From our first moments as human beings, the challenges we face at every level of development are the very ones that provide the necessary fuel to grow to the next. That is why people who are shielded from the challenges of problems the world throws at them don't ever grow up. It is also why those who understand that challenges are nothing more than opportunities for growth actually grow faster than those who don't, and even those who just muddle through.

So here is our challenge: to face the difficulties of our current circumstances, and seize them as a spectacular opportunity for growth. It won't be easy. Real growth never is. Reflect back; has it been the easy times or the hard times that have led to growth in your own life? It has been the challenging times. This is true of all the great people you know. Go find some and ask them.

This time of great difficulty is a time of unprecedented opportunity. Not the opportunity to make things easier and more comfortable, just better. We should seize it for ourselves. We should seize it for our children. We should seize it for those in our employ. We couldn't go purchase this opportunity for growth even if we wanted to.

Does this mean that we need an unrealistic "positive outlook" in order to adopt this approach? No, it simply means that we must seize the challenges of our day, as have all generations before. In facing the difficulties with an eye toward personal and collective growth, we will no doubt look back positively on these times and see how they've "solved us" for the better.

Carpe Diem.