Wisdom

“I wisdom, am mistress of discretion, the inventor of lucidity of thought. Good advice and sound judgment belong to me, perception…strength…”

Proverbs 8:12-14
The theme of this issue of Virtuous Reality is Wisdom – “the guardian of our choices”. Wisdom “guides us to the right path at the right moment and offers clarity of thought and deeper understanding”. In the past four months Virtues Project International Association (VPIA) has worked steadfastly to unite the collective wisdom of our amazing team. Our dedicated board members, committee chairpersons and a growing suite of enthusiastic volunteers are fully committed to the implementation of a robust three year Strategic Plan!

As we reflect deeply to ensure sustainability of The Virtues Project™ we practice Wisdom in every aspect of our team building: “seeking knowledge, reflecting, and being open to new inspiration”. Our Fund Development Committee is exploring options in the areas of sponsorship, giving campaigns, special events, product and merchandizing, professional development and training opportunities, legacy planning, and accessing of grant and foundation funding. Our operational committees are moving forward with work plans to establish a Mentoring Program, the International Development Fund, the Trauma Healing Program, Research initiatives and this Newsletter-Virtuous Reality.

We are also creating exciting connections with others who have a common mission. We look forward to being a part of the upcoming National Conference On Character to be held in Abbotsford, British Columbia, Canada on Oct.16 and 17, 2014. Our recent partnership with Let it Ripple - The Science of Character increased our exposure as we joined 1500 other organizations for Character Day. Drawing on the Wisdom of our new partners and affiliates will also help us to ensure that we are “on the right path at the right moment”.

I am inspired daily by the passion and love for The Virtues Project and how it continues to spread around the globe. The Wisdom, found in The Five Strategies™, is being shared by our volunteers in Thailand, Australia, Japan, the Virgin Islands, the Netherlands, Fiji and via social media! Our product sales on the Virtues Shop continue to increase as a result of these community driven and virtual awareness initiatives. Our daily virtues posts on our Facebook Page have generated more than a thousand new followers and are reaching an average of 3,000 people a day. Wouldn’t it be wonderful to share the Wisdom of these virtues picks with a million people worldwide each day!

Wisdom helps us to act confidently once we have given careful consideration to options. It helps us to resist distracting impulses, to reflect before we act and to have maturity and patience to make sustainable decisions. This is truly our collective responsibility as we work to ensure the sustainability of The Virtues Project. Thank you for sharing the Wisdom of TVP each and every day!

With Love and in Service, 
Eva
Strategy #1 - Speak the Language

…of virtues as language shapes character. The way we speak and the words we use, have great power to discourage or to inspire.

Awareness of The Virtues Project™ is growing throughout Fiji as a result of constant radio broadcast relayed on the Mix FM radio station by Ms. Balavu Tora. Ms. Tora hosts the Sunday Breakfast Shows in both English and –i-Taukei (Fijian) language. Awareness is further strengthened on the Mix FM face book page, which is sighted, liked and commented on by thousands of listeners and readers. Trained by Virtues Project Master Facilitators, the radio station staff uses The Five Strategies™ to improve their relationship with management. Their goal is to foster unity and understanding.

Workshops on The Five Strategies for prisoners continue to be provided by Shirley Matau. Shirley informs us that Fiji Correction Services has accepted the budget for her service. Her service includes transport and fees for Keasi, an ex-prisoner, who has turned his life around as a result of being trained in using The Five Strategies. Keasi has enthusiastically committed to helping with the work in prisons. Keasi has connections in Naitasiri, Vita Levu, Fiji, and hopes to have virtues workshops offered in these locations. With Keasi living nearby to assist, Shirley plans to conduct introductory training for the prison officers.

Another cause for celebration is that a concept paper has been given to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (UK) to address empowering women in order to help them prevent violence against women, their children, and families using The Five Strategies of The Virtues Project. Additionally, this paper addresses developing a parenting project based on a previous project done in 2008 - 2010. If the proposal is accepted the project would be for 9 months beginning in June.

Reporting from Fiji – Verona Lucas
When considering the virtue of Wisdom I think of the unforgettable moment in the early days of Dan and my researching the virtues in the world’s wisdom traditions. I asked him, “What ARE these things? They are more than concepts, actions or character traits.” And as I wrote the virtues for the *Family Virtues Guide*, John would look over at me and say, “You finished another one, didn’t you?” I always trembled with the power of these awesome entities. So, when Dan later said, “I did some more research and discovered that in nearly all the sacred texts, virtues are described as a very high order of Angels,” I knew it was true.

I often wonder how anyone can live without them. Virtues are the very best gifts we can give or receive in this life.

The virtue of Wisdom is a powerful guide -- the guardian of our choices, the messenger of our souls. Calling on the Spirit of Wisdom is an especially refined form of prayer. *Whenever a decision faces us, it is Wisdom that brings us lucidity of thought.* Its practice may mean holding a decision gently in Discernment, trusting that the answer will appear with perfect timing, though not always our preferred timing! Or Wisdom may allow us to be quickly decisive, trusting our inner knowing.

To know the difference takes true Wisdom.

* ~

"Whenever a decision faces us, it is Wisdom that brings us lucidity of thought...."

~Linda Kavelin-Popov, Aitutaki, Cooke Islands

Enjoy Linda’s [Blog](#) for ongoing inspiration.
Wondering why my seminar course in Comparative Politics was called “Practical Wisdom” I discovered that the term practical wisdom refers to what Aristotle called phronesis: the moral choices we make in almost any daily practice. It is the balance of virtues in all aspects of life from nurturing friendships to developing professional expertise. Practical wisdom is a skill used when driving the process of thoughtful deliberation and is essential in legislative and judicial systems, in business when seeking opportunity, and in balancing service-centered care for clients. It is a crucial element of excellence in leadership and personal action. Knowing how to cooperate, engage, and communicate to build consensus or identify ‘dis-census’, requires practical wisdom.

We studied Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* to identify a practically wise person as one who practices the virtues of good sense, understanding, and intelligence. Good sense includes forgiveness, fairness, and good judgment or discernment. Understanding is essential where “matters concerned with doubt and deliberation are possible” and intelligence is the ability to obtain facts, to reason and to be perceptive. (NE 1962, 1143a)

Additionally we studied Barry Schwarz and Kenneth Sharpe’s book, *Practical Wisdom*, which defines the characteristics of a practically wise person as “one who knows the aims of the activity they're engaged in; uses the particularities and context to balance conflicting aims, interprets rules and improvises; is perceptive, socially intuitive and sees the grey in situations; is empathic; uses emotional awareness to signal reason and action be it judgment or decision making; has experience in the application of wisdom, and its accompanying virtues, and has integrated these characteristics into their being.”

Professor Maxwell Cameron emphasized how critical it is to develop the skill of practical wisdom through experience. Many students however, were skeptical as to whether virtues could be taught. As a Virtues Project Facilitator and Montessori educator I find it easy to argue that not only is this possible - it is essential. This was a teachable moment and I breathed in the courage to speak out. I described The Five Strategies™ and using my I-phone app shared a virtue card. I described how learning a virtues vocabulary creates a culture of affirmation and discernment.

We examined virtues from a variety of perspectives encompassing historical, scientific, social and literary origins. The course readings illuminated that developing virtues has been deeply embedded in our human journey. The act of being practically wise, essential to finding Aristotle’s ‘good life’ resonates in the work of The Virtues Project™, which is a guide to those in the pursuit of the ‘good life’. Searching and deliberating as to what is the wisest choice in any given situation is a skill that requires lifelong development. Developing excellences, as articulated by Aristotle, is a value shared by our virtues community. Where Aristotle defines the virtues characteristic of the practically wise person, The Five Strategies of The Virtues Project explicitly teach how to develop these virtues.

So in answer to the question – can virtues be taught? My answer is a resounding YES with The Five Strategies of The Virtues Project!

*Reporting from Canada, E. Hart*
Strategy #3 – Setting Clear Boundaries
…. Boundaries help us to live the good life.

Discipline as Transformation

Michael C. Selz, Vice Principal of the Robert Frost Middle School in Livonia, Michigan shares a Virtues Project approach to discipline.

Frost has initiated a discipline program unlike any other in the District. Discipline is viewed here as a positive opportunity to teach behaviour for living, not as a punishment. The framework for this education are the virtues, including such frequently called upon character builders as respect, obedience, self-discipline, detachment, honesty and responsibility.

Each incident that involves a discipline referral or report is typically channeled through my office. The framework for intervention involves first refocusing the student’s energies away from a defensive posture and into self-reflection. The student is given an explanation of missing or misapplied virtue that resulted in the office referral and then is encouraged to examine that particular virtue in depth.

Students are given packets which borrow heavily from The Virtues Project™ materials. A paraprofessional is available to assist students in completing them.

THE VIRTUES PACKETS:

1. Give the definition of the virtue in question (What is Kindness?)
2. Ask the student to apply the virtue to a variety of situations (What would Kindness look like if…?)
3. Invite the student to re-enact the situation that got them into trouble by correctly applying the virtues to the situation. This is done in writing.
4. Once the packet is complete, the student must then discuss the problem and solution with a counselor and parent.
5. All parties sign the completed packet.
6. Finally the student returns to whomever s/he has offended or hurt, or to the person who made the referral and discusses the matter with them. At this point apologies and/or reparations are made, as directed by the Assistant Principal, with input from the offended staff member/student.
7. In serious or repeat behavioural matters, the Assistant Principal contacts parents by phone. The Language of Virtues again provides the framework for discussion. Parental reaction has been notably more peaceful and less defensive using this approach. Suspensions were reduced last year by more than 40%.

What do you do when you find yourself a few cards short of a full deck? The deck I’m referring to is the Virtues Reflections Cards! Call me superstitious, but I prefer the advantage of a full deck to divine my daily virtue. Playing with a few cards short of a full deck and I might miss out! However, this is how I’ve challenged myself to use incomplete decks:

Recently I put some cards in a wicker basket and brought them to yoga. I affixed a “take one and pay it forward” sign to the basket.

Another way I use cards from an incomplete deck is when sending notes to family and friends. As I write the note I reverently ask “what virtue would be meaningful for this person?” Always as I choose the card from my mixed bag of orphaned reflections, up pops the perfectly profound response. I then enclose the chosen card as a virtues acknowledgment to the recipient of my note.

And then there is crafting. Using stray reflection cards for crafting is fun and feels very purposeful to me. When laminated, these beautiful cards can be transformed into the most meaningful bookmarks. I just punch a hole in the top left corner, attach a special string of beads and my gift is as unique as the person receiving it.

The most meaningful manner in which I parted with the cards occurred on the cool rainy streets of downtown Halifax, Nova Scotia. In June 2011 Virtues Project facilitators from all over the world gathered for the Unity in Harmony mentorship, (an inspirational wellspring), two of my facilitator friends and I literally ‘took it to the streets’, we engaged with homeless youth, acknowledged and gifted them with cards.

Figuring out what to do with extra cards I’ve collected has been fun and although I prefer a full deck on hand for my daily pick, I am currently in between decks! My daily dose is coming from the posts I receive on my Facebook feed. That’s working for me now, but I know I need my own full fresh deck to help divine my daily pick. I’ll be placing my order soon. In the interim, I’m having fun crafting, sharing, gifting and gluing the cards that want another life outside of the pouch!

Reporting from California, Wendy Mather
Strategy #5 – Offering Companioning

….deep attentive listening, is a powerful tool for supporting others by helping them reach the ‘heart’ of their needs.

REFRAMING THE INNER CRITIC

Does the 2nd September mean anything to you? For some it signifies a time in 1945 when General MacArthur watched Japan sign surrender on a battleship. For a young child in New Zealand, September 2nd was her birthday. Soon after her birth, her father labeled her a ‘little Mussolini’ only to later re-label her a ‘blue-stockings’, good for nothing but reading books. Even on her wedding day that birthday “joke” was brought up. Later, when undergoing divorce from her husband this message resurfaced. In this situation the names others called her was nothing compared to what she called herself. She needed to learn to silence her ‘Inner Critic’. So on the 2nd of September in 1995, that little girls 50th birthday, a program was offered that presented a healthy way to subdue her harsh inner critic….it was a workshop designed by The Virtues Project™.

On my 50th birthday I attended this introductory seminar, hosted by the co-founders Linda Kavelin-Popov and Dan Popov in Auckland. It extended over the week and included an educational seminar and facilitator training. Although I was very familiar with the virtues words in my community I wanted to be able to share it with others and very quickly I realized it was just as much for me. It was the balm needed to reframe the vocabulary of my harsh inner critic. The Five Strategies™ provided me with a method that was healing and liberating. In the following days I would place a Virtue word at the top of my diary page, looking for times to see it in action or use it to encourage myself, and others I met. This program began my practice of using The Five Strategies of The Virtue Project.

One year I attended a weekend retreat to deepen my understanding of Strategy #5 known at that time as Spiritual Companioning now known as Offer Companioning. This strategy is a therapeutic model for listening deeply. At the workshop Linda modeled this practice, questioning gently and listening compassionately in order to find ‘the pearl’ of truth that the participant revealed. This process is referred to as ‘emptying one’s cup’. What is occurring is that the person speaking is given the space and time to talk until they reach the end of their story and by this process reveals what is truly at the heart of their concern. Another year I attended the Virtues Conference at Monash University, which attracted a huge range of cultures. This conference provided the experience of watching three different people one after another on stage receiving the Forgiveness card. The audience had a triple opportunity to see these individuals reflect deeply within.

It is no wonder The Virtues Project has a triple impact on our inner critic: A three-fold cord is not easily broken. Dan’s research and presentation, Linda’s exquisite language and John with his eye for beauty and skills honed as a Disney Imagineer has woven a beautiful safety net of virtues for everyday actions that give us The Five Strategies (among them Strategy #1 Speak the Language of Virtues and #5, Offer Companioning), that protect us against our hostile inner critic by reframing our thinking, listening to us deeply and seeing us clearly. For this I am grateful.

Reporting from Auckland, New Zealand, Grace Bower
The Art and Science of Virtues

This section is our offering of additional resources that will promote a deeper understanding of our theme for this issue of Virtuous Reality - Wisdom

(The views expressed are those of the authors; VPIA assumes no responsibility for the correctness, sufficiency or completeness found in the following links)

What Is Wisdom?
https://www.bigquestionsonline.com/content/what-wisdom

How Might Intellectual Humility Lead to Scientific Insight?
https://www.bigquestionsonline.com/content/how-might-intellectual-humility-lead-scientific-insight

Andrew Zuckermann’s Wisdom Trailer
http://vimeo.com/5702381

Does Wisdom Bring Happiness (or Vice Versa)?

Using Our Practical Wisdom - TED

Looking at Wisdom from Mid-Life

First-Class Ethics: The Golden Means are the Ends
http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-ethical-professor/201401/first-class-ethics-the-golden-means-are-the-ends

Let it Ripple
http://www.letitripple.org/character_strengths
GET INVOLVED!

**90-Day Virtue Ripple Effect: A Call to Action!** Visit us on facebook and post your "Ripple Virtue" - the strength virtue or a growth virtue you believe will best serve you in making a difference. Let's make the second generation of The Virtues Project™ a wave that will cover the world. We want to hear your story!

Daily Virtues Pick on **Facebook:** Share a comment about how each virtue speaks to you. Tell us where you see Virtue in “Action” or “Called For”. Tell us what happened when you named that virtue as you saw it in action.

**Become a Roaming Reporter:** Have you seen or heard about a great initiative involving The Virtues Project? Capturing stories about the work of our global community is inspirational. If you want to interview people or have an article to share contact Lize Hart, editor of our newsletter, Virtuous Reality or fill in our [Submission Form](#).

**Become a VPIA Volunteer:** If you have an interest in these positions or other VPIA volunteer opportunities please complete our [online volunteer application form](#).

**Become a Friend of VPIA:** Email [contactus@virtuesproject.com](mailto:contactus@virtuesproject.com) to join Friends of VPIA. You will receive regular updates, our newsletter and information about upcoming VPIA events directly to your inbox.

**Participate in Gifts of Generosity Campaign:** VPIA is currently accepting donations to establish The Virtues Project International Development Fund. These funds will provide free/subsidized Virtues Project resources/materials and training to low income and high-risk communities. Stay tuned to our website for information about this Fund and how to apply. You can donate here [Gifts of Generosity](#).

**Update your contact information:** If you are a Master Facilitator or the contact person for a Virtues Connection, please visit our website to verify your contact information. Need to update your information? Please email your new details to [contactus@virtuesproject.com](mailto:contactus@virtuesproject.com).
WHAT’S NEW?

Facilitator Program Leaders Manual – Master Facilitators can download a digital copy of the Leaders Manual directly from The Virtues Shop. Please visit The Virtues Shop for further details.

Updated Global Mentorship Page: We have added an updated global Mentorship page to www.virtuesproject.com. Information and video from the 25th Anniversary Mentorship in Aitutaki is now available. Future global mentorship planning committees may now utilize this page to share pre and post information regarding global mentorships.

Round Up Fund-raising Campaign: Shoppers on The Virtues Shop now have the option to Round Up the cost of their order to the nearest dollar, five or ten dollars as a donation to VPIA.

The Virtues Shop: Haven’t visited The Virtues Shop in awhile? Check out the new items.

Online Submission Tools for Master Facilitator Nomination and Profile Registration Forms: MFs can now submit nominations for new MFs using an online submission form. Newly designated MFs can submit their registration forms for creation of their online profiles, using a similar form. To access these forms email contactus@virtuesproject.com. These forms will soon be accessible on our website.

Newly appointed Master Facilitators: VPIA congratulates and welcomes the following individuals to our global family of Master Facilitators:

Christine Ayling  Alberta, Canada  Nominated by D. Wheatcroft
Glenis Knox  Frankton, New Zealand  Nominated by J. Dixon
Kathleen Riggins  Sapporo, Japan  Nominated by K. Sakamoto, Y. Abe, R. Suzuki
Kim In Young  Korea  Nominated by Virtues Project, Korea
Mai Anderson  Norway  Nominated by L. Kragh
Niesje Sonneveld  The Netherlands  Nominated by A. Wiersma, W. Henson
Peggy Shibuya  Sapporo, Japan  Nominated by K. Sakamoto, Y. Abe, R. Suzuki
Sherrie Oda  Sapporo, Japan

Susan Lyon  Cambridge, New Zealand

Kimiko Schwerin  Tokyo, Japan  Nominated by D. Feldman
Robin Arnold  Christchurch, New Zealand  Nominated by E. Ramer
POSITIVE POSSIBILITIES:

Stay tuned for more exciting information about the following VPIA Strategic Plan initiatives:

- Annual International Virtues Day
- Online VPIA Auction Fund-raiser
- Tri-annual International Virtues Conference
- New Virtues Project™ merchandizing items to be available from The Virtues Shop
- Graceful Endings Facilitator Training Program
- VPIA Mentoring Program
- TVP™ International Development Fund
- TVP™ Trauma Healing Program
- VPIA sponsored research
- VPIA annual Virtues Acknowledgement Gala Dinner Fund-raiser
VIRTUOUS REALITY

WHO WE ARE:

Virtues Project International Association

A global grassroots initiative to inspire the practice of virtues in everyday life, sparking a global revolution of kindness, justice, and integrity in more than 100 countries through Facilitators, Master Facilitators, Champions and Virtues Connections.

The Virtues Project™ (TVP™), founded in Canada in 1991 by Linda Kavelin-Popov, Dr. Dan Popov and John Kavelin, was honored by the United Nations as a "model global program for families of all cultures". TVP empowers individuals to live more authentic meaningful lives, families to raise children of compassion and integrity, educators to create safe, caring and high performing learning communities, and leaders to encourage excellence and ethics in the workplace. It is inspiring and mobilizing people worldwide to commit acts of service and generosity and to heal violence with virtues.

The Five Strategies™ awaken the gifts of character, through inspiring programs, books and materials that help us to remember who we really are and to live by our highest values.

OUR MISSION:
To help people to remember who they truly are and to live by their highest values.

OUR VISION:
A world in which virtues are valued, acknowledged and exemplified in daily practices and human interactions.

VPIA BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Eva Marks Maclsaac: Chief Executive Officer
Dara Feldman: Chairperson
Liaison Education and Professional Development and Fund Development Committee
Barbara Mackenzie: Secretary
Liaison Communications/Marketing and Newsletter Committee
Donna Wheatcroft: Vice-Chairperson
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Nomination and Human Resources
Valerie Hess and Kimiko Scherwin: International Development Fund
Christine Ayling: Trauma Healing Program:
Betty Doherty: Mentoring Program
Elizabeth (Lize) Hart: Newsletter

Virtuous Reality Newsletter

Editor: Lize Hart

Guest contributors:
Linda Kavelin-Popov
Eva Marks Maclsaac
Wendy Mather
Verona Lucas
Grace Bower

OUR MISSION:
To connect, celebrate and be inspired by people who are engaged with and integrating The Five Strategies™ of The Virtues Project™ worldwide.

OUR VISION:
To produce a quarterly e-newsletter with elegance, simplicity and clarity that deepens our connections

CONTACT US:

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END NOTES

Reflections and Inspiration for our Global Community
As found on The Virtues Project Reflection Cards

* * *

THE PRACTICE OF WISDOM

• I make discerning choices.
• I resist distracting impulses.
• I listen to my better judgment.
• I reflect before I act.
• I seek spiritual guidance.
• I trust my deepest truth.

I am thankful for the gift of Wisdom. It is the messenger of my soul.