SUCCESS

To laugh often and much.  
To win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children.

To earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends.

To appreciate beauty; 
To find the best in others.

To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition.

To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived.

That is to have succeeded.

~~ Ralph Waldo Emerson  
American essayist and poet - 1803-1882

Contact: Jack Levine - Jack@4Gen.org - www.4Gen.org – 850.567.5252
A Baker's Dozen Lessons I Learned from Grandma Minnie

I hope you'll share these few minutes with me reflecting on the importance of grandparents in the lives of our families.

For most of us, no one provided a more vital link to our heritage and family history than our grandparents. Wherever they were from, and no matter their background, our grandparents provided a first-person connection to our past. Whether by birth or through adoption, grandparents are treasures deserving of honor and respect. Like all of us, none were perfect, but most were there for us when we needed them most.

The wisdom of our elders is irrefutable. I distinctly remember so many ways my grandparents, especially my dear Grandma Minnie, influenced me by example. Here are a baker’s dozen life lessons I learned at her kitchen table....

♦ Love knows no boundary. Keeping close to the people you love, and learning to love them without having to love everything they do, is the key to family strength. "You don't have to be perfect to be loved." Minnie held tight to those she needed and those who needed her.

♦ An open door is an open heart. Minnie's kitchen table was a place where others came to eat and be fed spiritually. If a neighbor or their family had a problem, she was there for them. "If I needed them, I'd hope for the same treatment." The golden rule cannot tarnish.

♦ Waste not; want not. Finishing our meals or saving leftovers for another time is one of the most compelling constants for our elders. Many remembered the pangs of deprivation, so therefore valued the food on their plates and the treasure of having enough to eat for everyone. Minnie always made a little extra, just in case an unexpected visitor came for dinner.
♦ **Charity begins at home.** As little as they had, our grandparents always seemed to find a way to help others in need. Minnie had a tin can in which she would drop coins..."a little something for those with less than us." Their example of giving, both through volunteer time and money provided the family a clear sense of appreciating the value of what we had. Reaching across the street as a way of helping others is good for them and us, too!

♦ **Cleanliness is next to godliness.** A clean home is the symbol of how we should conduct our lives in the sight of others. Minnie swept the sidewalk in front of her house almost every day. "When our guests come to our door, they should have a clear and welcoming path." Picking up after ourselves so those who follow us have a clean path is a great lesson personally and environmentally.

♦ **Progress comes in little steps.** Expecting too much too soon is unreasonable. "A drop plus a drop fills up the pot" was among Minnie's favorite phrases. Every day is another opportunity to take positive steps...for family and for community. Her crocheting and knitting prowess proved that each stitch is essential to make a beautiful garment.

♦ **Laughter is the closest distance between two people.** It's a pleasure to enjoy the company of others and to hear a good joke, tell a witty story, and listen to the folk tales of the old country. These are among life's great gifts. "Frowns make more wrinkles than smiles," Minnie would say with glee.

♦ **Honest compliments are among our most valued possessions.** Giving credit when credit is due, and honoring the leadership of those whose energy and enthusiasm helps others, is important. "People shouldn't assume you know about their good works. Tell them they are appreciated." And if someone compliments you, accept the gift with grace.

♦ **If there's a problem, try to fix it.** Minnie knew that "you'll sit a long time with your mouth wide open before a roasted chicken will fly in." Ignoring a problem is neither smart nor sensible. Even a failed attempt at solving the problem is better than not doing anything.

♦ **Don't leave politics up to someone else.** As an immigrant girl, Minnie felt the sting of discrimination and injustice. She was a suffragist as a young woman, and upon becoming a naturalized
citizen, she voted for the first time in 1920. Minnie celebrated that right by never missing an election in her life. Even into her 90's, when she had to helped into the voting booth, she did her duty with dignity. "Power is not given, it's won with courage and hard work," she said.

♦ **Words without deeds are empty.** Someone who makes a promise and doesn't keep his word is an emotional thief. 'It's better to keep quiet than make a meaningless offer." How many people set others up for disappointment by saying rather than doing?

♦ **Patience pays dividends.** Whether it was baking her famous cinnamon buns or preparing a full holiday dinner for 16, Minnie knew that the process required patience and persistence. Slow food preparation may seem archaic, but the beauty of yeast raised dough, simmering spices, and closely watched pots gave the family an appreciation of the love that went into so many meals. "I like to cook because when I see the faces of satisfied eaters, I'm happy."

♦ **Resting is a reward for working hard.** Minnie earned her rest, and made the time to relax, listen to music, observe nature, or read for pleasure. "Too much of anything isn't good." When the Sabbath came, Minnie understood that her rest provided the emotional and physical renewal she needed for a productive week ahead.

---

For additional information, contact:

**Jack Levine, Founder**
4Generations Institute
Tallahassee
[jack@4Gen.org](mailto:jack@4Gen.org)
[www.4Gen.org](http://www.4Gen.org)
A Top Ten Insider's Guide to Legislative Advocacy

As an experienced advocate, I'm frequently asked for "how-to" tips on effective strategies for legislative and congressional advocacy by folks who are not at the Capitol every day. Since effective advocacy is a 12-month job, the following fits into the category of a year-round homework assignment.

I trust you understand the value of speaking up on public policy matters which concern and interest you. Responsible advocacy is the heartbeat of a representative democracy. Remember....the root of advocacy is "voca"....the voice! I welcome your feedback and hope you will share this with your volunteer and professional colleagues.

1. Don't be a stranger to your elected officials and their staff members. The most persuasive messages come from familiar faces. Know them by name, and make sure they know you by name. Anonymity is the antithesis of effectiveness. Invite officials to your community partnership programs for conversations and photos. When it comes to creating a positive impression....Seeing is Believing.

2. Introduce yourself at every opportunity. Always have business cards with you and hand them out like candy at Halloween -- always have extras. Ask for cards from others and send them an acknowledgement note or e-mail within a day or two of the meeting.

3. Always say "thank you" before you say "please." Even if you disagree with your elected official's positions on some (or even most) issues, they are more likely to listen to you if you've found some way to praise them. If nothing else, thank them for the courage to be a public office holder.

4. A well-written, brief thank you note is always appreciated. Remember, officials get 25 complaints for every compliment. Like the wise hotel maitre 'd once taught me in my dining room waitering days, "Only two types of people respond well to an honest compliment -- males and females."

5. The hometown connection is essential to help elected officials listen with both ears. Concentrate on principles of policy, rather than too many specifics which may change by the hour. Trust that your "every day professional advocates" know the details; your job is to set the stage with your elected officials and to pave the way for your allied advocates at the Capitol. There's a real difference between lobbying and advocacy. Lobbyists make it hard for elected officials to say "No." Advocates make it easy for them to say "Yes." Advocates do not need to be partisan, do not require a PAC, and never resort to threats or retribution to be effective.

6. Always be concise and to the point. The issue or program you advocate should to be compressed into a paragraph and a two-minute presentation. The key to influence is not volume, but precision. Elected officials are not experts, but don't want to be overwhelmed with your knowledge. Have them trust you as someone to turn to for more details if they are needed. Sharpen your point and it will make an impact.
7. Engage the media (or schmooze the newsies!!) who have the power to send your message far and wide. An expert source and passionate volunteer are golden to every reporter and editorial/opinion writer -- but, be careful: they should not perceive you as seeking "publicity." Once you're viewed as an accessible expert when they're on deadline, you can pitch them ideas anytime. The media is an advocate's most cost-effective megaphone.

8. Write Letters to the Editor. Submit guest op-ed columns, and encourage allies to do the same. The opinion pages are read word-for-word by every public official. It's where powerful people test the pulse of the thinking community. You have their attention if your case is made in print. Never attack, always attract. Be positive and persuasive, giving your readers a reason to care and act on your behalf.

9. Advocacy requires the art of compromise….never expect it all. While we strive for unanimity, we work for majority. There's a difference between compromising principles (a no-no) and a healthy policy discussion. Long-term relationships require understanding where everyone in coming from before you know where you're going. Burned bridges are impossible to cross, and antagonistic scars may never heal.

10. While there's strength in diversity, there's power in unity. Bring as many diverse voices to your cause as possible, but reach a unifying message. Agree on the important unifying goals and success will be achieved.

"Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world.
Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

- Anthropologist Margaret Mead

For additional information on advocacy strategies contact:

Jack Levine, President
Advocacy Resources
jack@4Gen.org
www.4Gen.org
850.567.5252
Let Your Voice Be Heard - Letter to the Editor Tips

Every day, daily newspapers publish Letters to the Editor and Op-Ed columns. While advocates know that only a small percentage of newspaper readers scan the Editorial page and daily letters and columns, be assured that 100-percent of your community’s decision-makers read every Editorial, Guest Column and Letter to the Editor.

Top Ten Tips to a Successful Letter to the Editor

1. Use e-mail. The letters e-address is published on the editorial page. E-mailing your letter enhances the likelihood of publication and reduces the chance that your letter will be incorrectly transcribed. Always include your name, e-mail, mailing address, and daytime phone number for confirmation of authorship. You may also include your affiliation if that’s relevant to the content of your letter and you have authorization to communicate publicly on behalf of the organization or agency.

2. Refer to a recent news article or editorial in the first sentence of your letter. For example, "Your coverage of the critical need for teenage alcohol prevention programs (August 23) is welcomed....." Using this opener gives the letters editor a point of reference and gives relevance to the timeliness of your opinion. Letters should, whenever possible, relate to events or issues of the day. Timely relevance increases the prospect of publication.

3. Keep your letter to a concise 4-5 paragraphs; 2-3 sentences each (approx 175-200 words). Do not give too much information, but just enough to give credence to your opinion. If your letter is too long, it will either be rejected outright, or you run the risk of a choppy editing that blunts the point. See below re: Op-Ed columns if you want to present a longer, more explanatory opinion piece for publication.

4. Don't take shots at political leaders or other prominent community leaders, especially by name. Frustration and anger are powerful motivators, but too often are sources of regret. Unless you're prepared to have the person you're targeting as a life-long opponent, be cautious. Remember, the toes you step on today may be connected to the a-- you'll need to kiss tomorrow.
5. **Give readers a chance to understand your stake in the issue without getting too personal.** It's proper to write "As a parent, I've learned this key lesson......" or "My career as a therapist for abused children leads me to believe that...." You can be emotionally charged without being sensational. "With all we've learned about the needs for supporting quality foster care, I'm outraged that......" is fine, but "I'm angered at the idiocy of politicians who think that......" is not. Do not hurt your case by seeming shrill or over the edge.

6. **Never miss the chance to say "Thank You" to a business leader, civic volunteer, or political official** who has provided extraordinary service in a cause dear to your heart. Giving gratitude publicly is always well-received, as long as it's merited and documented. Remember...there are only two kinds of people who respond well to an honest compliment...males and females.

7. **If your letter doesn’t appear within a week of submittal, send a polite brief e-mail** to the Editorial Page Editor or Letters Editor asking whether it is being considered. Give the date you transmitted it, and attach a copy of the original. A brief phone message to the letters editor is also a good idea, but if there's no response, don't get angry. Major papers receive many more letters that they have space to publish. Try again. Remember that burned bridges are impossible to cross.

8. **If you have more to say than a letter permits, you may want to submit a Guest Column or Op-Ed.** Call the Editorial Page Editor and ask for the paper's specifications re: length limitations and best timing for submittal. Usually, the space requirement limits your Op-Ed to 600-700 words. This vehicle is a very effective communications tool, but the competition for space with national and locally generated opinion columns is fierce. Don’t be discouraged if your first few Op-Eds are not accepted for publication.

9. **You may e-mail a photo, as well, usually if requested.** Make sure the photo is current, clear and a well-composed head-shot. Have a professionally taken photo that has you looking directly into the camera lens. That "far-away glance into the future look" may be suitable for a high-school yearbook, but not for newspapers. There’s nothing as distracting as a bad photo to divert attention away from your good writing.

10. **Always, always, without question, proofread your submission.** Never, ever trust Spell Check on your computer to catch all errors. That device will usually detect typos, but hardly ever highlights the wrong word if it is, in fact, a word. I collect examples of horrific (and usually hilariously funny) errors which Spell Check did not detect. Repeat…always proofread, and if you’re not confident in that task, find a team member who is. In my experience, the red ink of retired English teachers’ pens never dries out!

*For additional advocacy and communications strategies contact:*

Jack Levine  
jack@4Gen.org  
850/567-5252 (voicemail/cell)