

Dear readers,

In these times of COVID-19, we ask ourselves many questions. We scrutinize things. We are critical of ourselves. Sometimes we blame ourselves. We feel afraid. We worry. We're looking for something to help us get through this uncertain time.

That's when I find good proverbs and sayings – both old and new – to be helpful.

In this book, I have put together a few that I think can help in this crisis.

What (and WHO) is HopeLit?

HopeLit is a voluntary union of creatives, mainly from the book industry. HopeLit wants to pay it forward through creative content and books for children and grownups. We want to be a ray of hope in a currently chaotic world. HopeLit wants to show how a common goal can unite us across industry boundaries and competition. »There is life after COVID-19 and that's what we are working toward. Together. Insieme. Ensemble. Samen. Birlikte ...«

How you can use our texts and images?

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COULDA,
WOULDA...

Old and New Sayings for Challenging Times

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COULDA, WOULD A, SHOULD A

Have you asked yourself lately: „What could I have done differently? What if we hadn't done this, that or the other thing last year? Is there something we should have done instead?“

No matter what your „shouldas“ might be, the time for them is over. Yesterday was yesterday, today is today and tomorrow is tomorrow.

Today, it's time to make the decisions that will affect our future; we did the best we could yesterday.

There is another lovely expression for this:

„There is no use crying over spilled milk.“ What's done is done.

YOU CAN'T MAKE AN OMLETTE WITHOUT BREAKING SOME EGGS

Even if you do nothing at all, you can make mistakes.

But if you do something, there's also a chance you might make them.

And if you do a lot, well... you could make a lot of mistakes.

The moral is: something can always go wrong, no matter what you do. But if you take action, at least you have the feeling that you've done something.



WHEN ONE DOOR CLOSES...

We've probably all heard the saying before. Maybe it's trite. But, at some point, we've probably all had a door open for us in life that we didn't even know existed.

>> LIFE CAN ONLY BE
UNDERSTOOD BACKWARDS,
BUT IT MUST BE
LIVED FORWARDS. <<

I find this quote from Sören Aabye Kierkegaard very comforting in times when it feels like the world is just spinning out of control. It's for the times when you find yourself standing there, in the bright sunshine, and wondering when you will finally wake up from this nightmare.



IT IS WHAT IT IS

Some things are what they are. We can't change them no matter how badly we wish we could. Especially now. You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink. And grass won't grow any quicker if you pull on it.



LIFE IS WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU WHILE YOU ARE BUSY MAKING OTHER PLANS

It's something we've all experienced: we make plans, and then everything turns out differently than we expected.

Life is change. That is probably one of the most difficult facts of all to accept. There are very few things that stay as they are—and the sooner we accept that, the easier our lives will probably be. The seasons also change: after winter comes spring, and then comes summer.



WALK A MILE IN HIS MOCCASINS

This Native American saying reminds us that we can't understand another person's perspective until we've walked a ways in their moccasins. We shouldn't judge people too quickly—or at all, if we can manage. How quickly do we form opinions? Judge others? But... do we know the reasons behind their actions? Do we know what they are going through right now, or what they have gone through in the past? Which of our shoes would they walk in? In high heels? Hiking boots? Flip flops?

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

An African saying tells us that it takes a whole village to raise a child. Sometimes it takes a village, but sometimes we just need one person who is there for us. However, finding a good friend isn't always easy. Maybe just being a good friend to someone else in the village would be a good first step?



ALL THAT GLITTERS IS NOT GOLD

Sometimes things seem very appealing, or look fantastic from a distance. But things can change quickly when you get closer, or look at what's behind it. There's another great phrase with a similar meaning: "Don't judge a book by its cover!" The cover might be beautiful, but the most important part of a book is what's inside.

NECESSITY IS THE MOTHER OF INVENTION

We've all become incredibly inventive of late. Think of all the creative uses we've found for toilet paper rolls. Or creative ways to make other people happy. Games for indoors. And what about all the facets of ourselves that we've discovered now, thanks to this crisis?

It's often the times when the crisis and the hardships are the worst that present the greatest opportunities. After all, the darkest hour is just before dawn.



BEAUTY IS IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

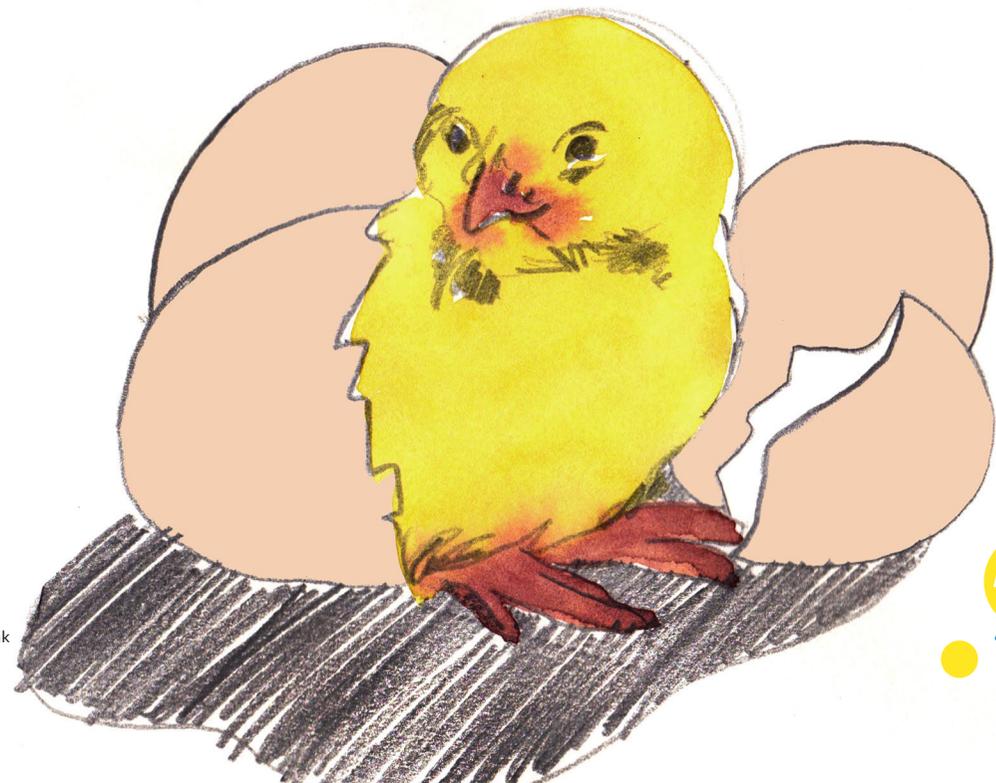
Much in life is just a matter of opinion and it all depends on how we view the world.

There's something called a self-fulfilling prophesy. When we keep telling ourselves "I can't do that. I'm worthless. That's definitely not going to work," then at some point it will become true. But when we see the glass as half-full, rather than half-empty, then at some point it will be full to the brim—without us noticing as it gradually got fuller and fuller.

What if, instead of saying "I can't," we said for a change: "I can!" ;-)

DON'T COUNT YOUR CHICKEN BEFORE THEY'VE HATCHED

This proverb tells us that we never know ahead of time how things will turn out. How often did we all think in the last year: next year?
Which horses did we bet on? And which ones did we walk/trot/gallop across the finish line with??



WE MAKE OUR OWN LUCK

Do horseshoes bring us luck? Or four-leaf clovers? Are other people responsible for our good luck? Or our bad luck? Or are we? And if we are, what can we do to create more good luck? What makes us lucky? And where can we find luck?

LIFE IS LIKE A BOX OF CHOCOLATES

It's just like Forrest Gump said: "You never know what you're going to get." But you can always hope for "better luck next time." When you've eaten the first chocolate, you can always have another. And another. We can change our lives as long as we live. And life is full of boxes of chocolates—we just need to keep looking for them. Go through life more slowly. Observe the world around us. The possibilities are limitless. And sometimes believing that really can move mountains.

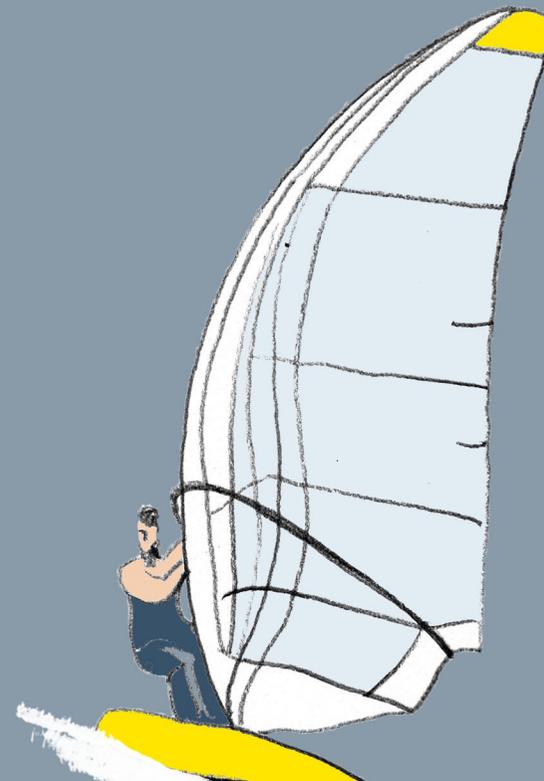
YOU CAN'T CHANGE THE WIND,
BUT YOU CAN ADJUST YOUR SAIL

When you first learn to windsurf, you spend a lot of time falling off the board, splashing into the water, and pulling yourself out again. You can use the power of the wind and to get where you want to go, even if the wind is blowing against you. You just have to know how.



THE SKY IS THE LIMIT

Our current experience is “The earth is the limit.” If we don’t treat the earth and each other well, all the “higher, faster, farther” in the world won’t do any good. In the word “responsibility” we find the word “response.” So what are our responses? What would the mirror tell us if it could talk?



THE GRASS IS ALWAYS GREENER ON THE OTHER SIDE

Sometimes it's hard to see all the good things in your own life. Has that ever happened to you? You catch yourself notice the things you don't have (yet) and the things that others have or do better? You only see the dark side of your own life—and the bright side of everyone else's?

But what would happen if we went over to the other side and looked a little closer?

Would we really rather be over there?

COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS

What would happen if we started to appreciate and be grateful for all the good things we have in our lives? To really count them. Write them down. Make ourselves aware of them. Every single day.

Just like this saying tells us to: "Count your blessings"

What would be on our lists?



IF YOU WANT TO GO FAST, YOU'D BETTER GO SLOW

Who hasn't had this experience before: you're in a hurry, you rush things, and in the end something happens that makes everything take even longer than it would have if you had just gone about it more slowly from the beginning.

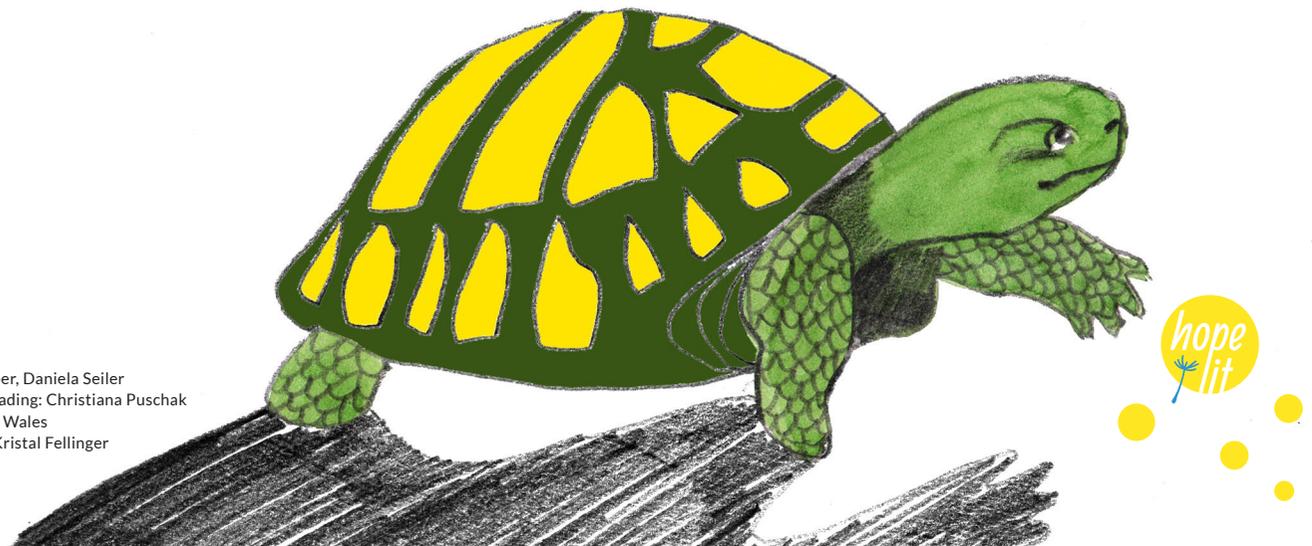
Have you ever walked through the city more slowly than usual? Try it! Maybe you'll notice details that you totally missed before. Scents. Buildings. People.

It's like the Chinese proverb: "Tortoises can tell you more about the road than hares."

And maybe you'll also ask yourself then: "Where are they all rushing off to?"

STRENGTH LIES IN CALMNESS

Action creates reaction. It's a law of physics. Often in life, we react to that which has already happened, what is happening right now, or what we think will happen in the future. Sometimes it's a primal instinct and important to help us survive. But sometimes it's more prudent to think things over a little longer. Wait a bit and have a cup of tea. Not react too hastily. Sleep on it for a night—or even a few nights. More often than not, things look quite different the next morning.



NOBODY'S BORN PERFECT

No matter whether we are reacting quickly or acting after long consideration, we're going to make mistakes sometimes. We understand that children make mistakes—that there are many things that they are still unable to do, that they need to learn first. But that often leads us to believe that adults to be capable of and know everything. The truth is, we're always learning, our whole lives long. Sometimes we have others in our lives who we can ask for advice, but sometimes we have to use the process of trial and error. Fall down. Get back up. Adjust your crown. And keep going!

CARPE DIEM

As life-long learners, we're still allowed to explore the world and our lives with fresh eyes. To be curious. To climb trees. Smell the roses. Jump in puddles. Not just when we're children. We're allowed to enjoy our lives and be excited about things. Moment by moment.

IF YOU WANT TO TEST A
MAN'S CHARACTER,
GIVE HIM POWER.

I once saw this quote from Abraham Lincoln on a calendar and remembered it because I think it's true. Even – and especially – right now. There are currently people who have power – and many who are incredibly powerless. In these times, I wish for many people with character. And that we might also count ourselves among them.

A JOURNEY OF A THOUSAND
MILES BEGINS WITH
A SINGLE STEP.

It takes many droplets to make an ocean and many steps to make a path. We (just) have to get started, brace ourselves, and believe in ourselves. When we feel like we can't keep going, it's OK to get help so that we can continue on our path when we're ready. With this in mind, I wish you (and all of us) a smooth road forward. I hope that these six old and new sayings will accompany you on your way and be of help when the going gets rough.

Best wishes,

Your

Claudia Gliemann

References:

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