

FORTUNE COOKIE PHILOSOPHY

By Joni M. Fisher

The next time you crack open a fortune cookie, try adding the words “in bed” at the end. It’s a tradition at my husband’s office. Thus, the fortune cookie advice “Ignorance never settles a question” transforms from sage inscrutable wisdom into bawdy humor – “Ignorance never settles a question in bed.” Last week’s favorite was “You are more talented than you realize.” In bed.

Of course, some fortunes do not lend themselves to the office add-on, but it does help put such pithy advice into perspective. Though I’m a sucker for fated romance movies like “Only You,” I don’t make life-changing decisions based on my daily horoscope or on a prediction from a traveling circus mystic.

I don’t play the Florida Lottery. The Lottery, like every base temptation, leads to harming those who cannot resist it. I’ve heard people say aloud that their retirement plan is based on playing the Lottery every week in hopes of having something to retire on. Puh-leeze. Do the research on how many lottery winners file for bankruptcy a few years after winning millions. I’m sorry, but if Mr. Investment-Gambler can’t manage his money well, having more of it absolutely will not solve his money management problem. It will turn his life into an opera complete with loud wailing and tragedy. Such a situation brings two sayings to mind. Easy come; easy go. A fool and his money are soon parted.

Horoscopes mislead gullible souls. Fortune cookies border on horoscope advice, but more often than not, they simply dispense sound advice in a well-turned phrase. Think Proverbs for the take-out dinner crowd or micro-Zen.

We are a fast paced society and so it's only natural for the lazy-minded to establish their philosophies of life as pithy advertising slogans. Quitters never win. Dare to be different. Yet to adopt any of these phrases as a personal philosophy is to cheat oneself. Be all you can be by joining the service? The catchy phrase promises that this path is the quick path, the sure path, to reaching that personal best. One life-changing decision and TA DA, instant Nirvana. Frankly, the best thing I've noticed in those who have served in the military is that after undergoing fierce discipline training these people develop self-discipline. Self-discipline is a valuable life skill, to be sure, but the military life isn't the only way to develop it nor is the military life for everyone. Such rigid conformity would like a near-life experience to artists, inventors and other creative types.

In our fast-faster-fastest society we must resist the temptation to find the quick answers for the important issues, the soul-searching questions of life. Why am I here? What is my purpose? How will my life make a difference? What really matters?

I grew up in the sixties, hippie babysitters and all. I was taught to question authority, challenge the status quo, be myself and think for myself. Yes, it is tempting to throttle back the brain and coast, letting other's ideas guide us. There are many wise people we can learn from, but there are twice as many inspiring fools out there hoping to lure us along with the masses into the wide path of

conformity and, dare I write it, political correctness. That lazy, go-with-the-flow mind-set is damaging.

Political correctness is tyranny wearing white gloves. Let's all think alike so we'll all get along. Anyone who expresses the least bit of discernment between moral and immoral behavior is labeled an extremist, a bigot, an enemy of that airy-fairy level of liberalism that accepts even covertly extreme self-destructive, dangerous or corrupt behavior as a "life style." How dare we judge? We judge because our brains are in gear. To be completely accepting of all behavior is to put society at risk. The drunk driver is excused for killing the family of four because he has an "illness." Never mind that this illness is self-inflicted. If I were to blindfold myself and drive down Main Street, then I'd be at fault for whatever harm happens, however, the drunk is exonerated. Show me the difference.

Following this bizarre logic, then shouldn't all such folks with this "illness" have their driver's licenses revoked? If they can't help their behavior, then shouldn't they be protected from harming themselves and others? Not according to the politically correct mind-set. Everyone else is responsible for the driver's illness, his parents, his co-workers, anyone who creates stress or discomfort that causes him to drink. Get it? Circular logic winds around the source of responsibility never inconveniencing him, never pointing a finger at him, but in fact, forgiving him for whatever harm he causes.

Political correctness philosophy needs a lemming theme song to be complete. I'm for civil order as much as any patriot, but diluting our various cultures, values and differences diminishes us. We are individuals.

God has blessed some of us with super-charged brains, capable of greatness. Let us lead instead of follow. Let us discover our own philosophies, beliefs, goals, and passions. Let us exercise our right to Free Speech. Shall we quietly watch Jerry Springer guests engage in public debate without protesting that the network is pandering? Let us speak up in as many public forums as possible. As Americans, we agree in the rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Even these values would be diminished if offered on fortune cookie inserts—You have the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. In bed.

You don't have the right to happiness; you have the right to pursue it. See the difference? It is not a government mandate that the whole of society must financially support the "happiness" of the poor. We can provide food, clothing, shelter and free education. The happiness comes from personal effort.

My fortune cookie advice? Think for yourself. And not just in bed.