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# OPPAM

O N L Y P O S I T I V E



## Nurturing Children's Mental Health



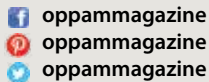
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# Editorial

**PROF ANTONEY P JOSEPH**  
Managing Director

## If You Ask, You May Gain

Two friends were walking through a village. Suddenly, they saw a man coming toward them with an elephant. One of the friends had a sudden thought: "Why not ask if I can have that elephant?" He shared the idea with his companion. But the other friend immediately disagreed.

"Do you have money to buy the elephant? You don't, right? Then why ask for it?"

The first friend replied, "I have no money. But what harm is there in asking? If I get it, that is an elephant for me. If not at least I will have spoken a word."

This is a familiar old story and saying from the countryside: 'If you get it, you gain an elephant; if you don't, you lose only a word.'

It carries a very relevant lesson for our daily lives. Some things can only be received if we ask. Asking should not be mistaken for undeservingly acquiring something or demanding without merit. Sometimes asking is simply a reminder - to let others know that such a person exists here, and that he is worthy of it. Not everyone will automatically understand our needs. We may need to remind them and that reminder often takes the form of asking.

Think of it this way: suppose you need a job. The first step is to send in your application. Instead, if you simply sit with folded hands thinking, "I have the skills and qualifications, let those who need me come and find me," nothing special will ever happen. As the saying goes, 'The one who needs it has no dignity.' So don't hesitate to ask.

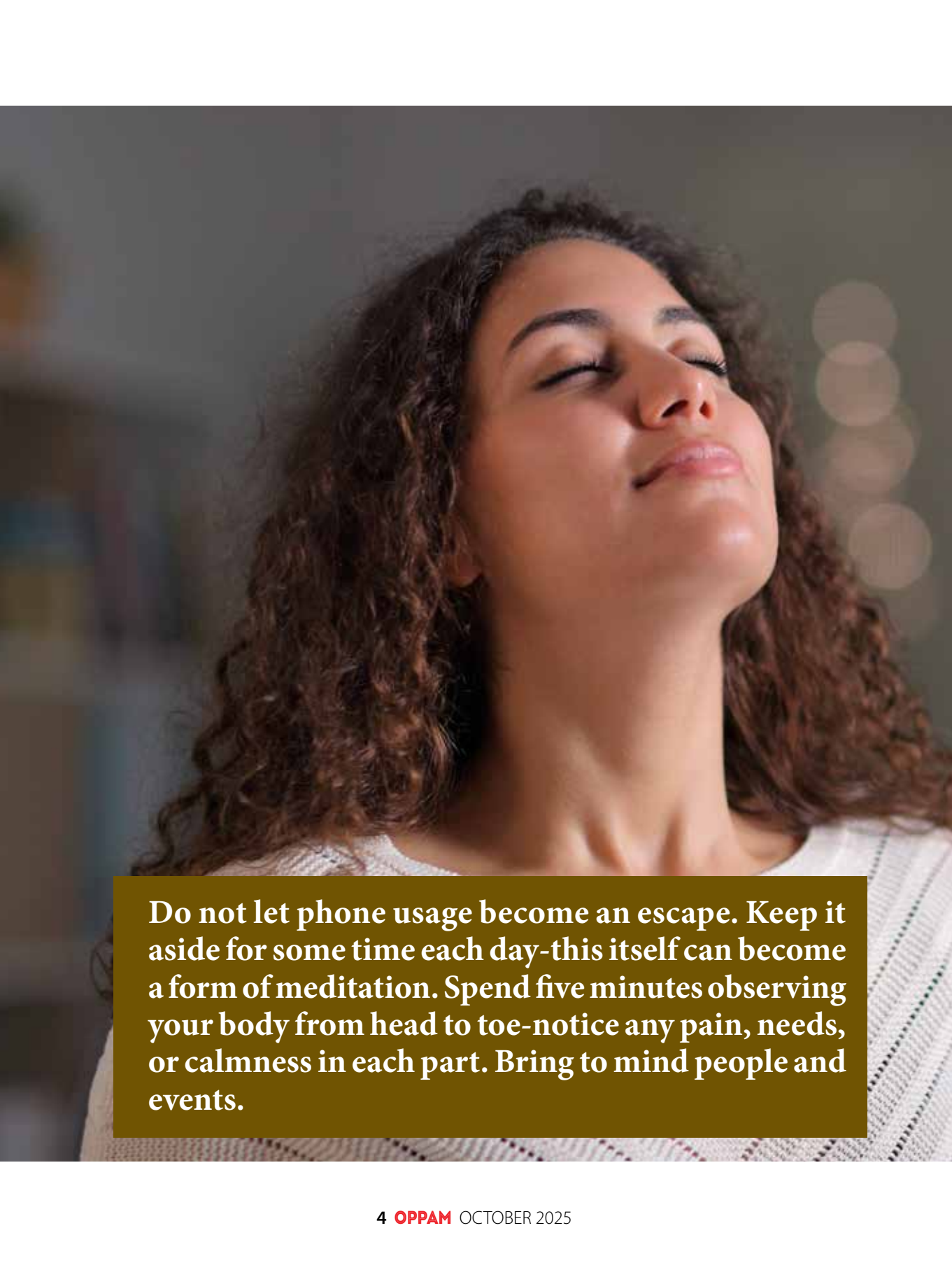
What holds us back from asking is often our own sense of inferiority and ego. "Am I even worthy of asking?" - that is inferiority. "Should I be the one to ask?" - that is ego. When these two come together, we fail to put forward our needs and desires.

Therefore, don't be afraid to ask. What do we truly lose by asking? Like the hero of the old story said: "If you get it, you gain an elephant; if not, you've only spoken a word."

Regards  
**Prof Antony P Joseph**

**Be Calm,  
Stay  
Peaceful**



A close-up photograph of a woman with dark, curly hair, her eyes closed and head tilted slightly upwards, appearing to be in a meditative or peaceful state. The background is softly blurred with bokeh light effects.

**Do not let phone usage become an escape. Keep it aside for some time each day-this itself can become a form of meditation. Spend five minutes observing your body from head to toe-notice any pain, needs, or calmness in each part. Bring to mind people and events.**



A peaceful life is everyone's goal and desire. But many do not know how to truly attain peace. Experts say that peace can be achieved through small, simple efforts. Here are some suggestions:

Start your day without immediately picking up the phone. Instead of rushing into news or negative social media comments, sit calmly on the bed, meditate, and take deep breaths. Even while waiting for a vehicle or working, observe each breath.

When eating, avoid distractions like phone or TV. Focus on the taste, smell, and texture of the food, and enjoy it. This brings calmness to both mind and body. Often, think before responding-what are we about to say, and will it hurt someone? Spending time in nature also brings peace of mind. Watch the clouds in the evening, walk in the rain, or admire flowers. All these support mental calmness.

Do every action with awareness. Whether walking or running, feel the energy of the movement. Observe whether your thoughts are pleasant or unpleasant, but do not criticize or suppress them. Thoughts are natural.

Every day, express gratitude for at least three things, even small ones. A good cup of coffee, a friend, or a restful sleep-all are blessings to be thankful for. Avoid multitasking. Focus on one thing at a time, whether work or a conversation.

Do not let phone usage become an escape. Keep it aside for some time each day-this itself can become a form of meditation. Spend five minutes observing your body from head to toe-notice any pain, needs, or calmness in each part. Bring to mind people and events. Be willing to let go of the hurt associated with them. That understanding is the beginning of peace.

Take a few moments of complete silence each day. No phone, no music, nothing- just listening to the sounds within yourself. Mental readiness is not about big things. Small habits can bring major changes to our minds. Practicing even one of these daily can help us enjoy life more mindfully.

# The Most Lonely Ones in This World

Campuses are full, classrooms echo with laughter, playgrounds resound with cheer. Modern means of communication have advanced greatly, yet studies say that the loneliest people in this world are teenagers. Why do teenagers feel lonely? The reasons for loneliness during adolescence include digital addiction, lack of real relationships, social pressure, and absence of self-reflection. To change this, empathy, attention to mental health and the presence of parents are crucial.

According to precise data, adolescents are the loneliest group in today's world. An international study reveals that children between the ages of 13 and 19 experience the highest levels of loneliness. This reality is very serious - a mental state that reflects an inner emptiness. Gaps in relationships with friends and family, fake connections seen through social media, and lack of self-confidence - all these together push teenagers into the depths of loneliness. Even if social media seems to connect them, the truth is that it does not create real bonds.

Today, most teenagers spend several hours a day on social media. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat have become spaces where they create self-representations of their identity. But what they get from these is not real connection, only an illusion. The 'likes' and 'follows' they receive on social media are seen as measures of value, compensating for the recognition they miss in real life.

Since they are unable to open up and talk freely, they suppress their problems within. This grows into a mental weakness. Similarly, when their phone or computer is not available, they experience great discomfort. They fear being alone, and even when among others, they feel that their presence has no worth.

The biggest problem loneliness brings to teenagers is self-doubt - questions like "Am I good enough?", "What is my purpose?" haunt them daily, wearing down the generation. This later leads to mental health issues like depression, anxiety, and often even suicidal tendencies. Here is where the role of parents becomes vital - they must step in with decisive interventions. Amid technology and academic pressures, parents need to remain accessible to their children. Families must be ready to listen to their children's emotions without criticism, and to acknowledge their pain.

It is time for our environment and educational systems to move toward a more mental health-focused approach. Counseling services in schools, spiritual training, and encouraging real-life connections in society are essential.

In this vast world, there is a place for human loneliness and tears. All of us must come together to listen to this generation, to understand them and to create a safe space for them. Building a world that gives comfort to teenagers is not just important, it is our collective responsibility.

**Snoring can happen in anyone's life for different reasons. But ignoring it can lead to dangerous health problems. The most important step is to identify the actual cause of snoring and treat it accordingly.**



A close-up photograph of a person's arm resting on a white, textured bedsheet. The arm is positioned horizontally across the upper left portion of the frame. The background is a soft-focus view of a bed with white linens.

# Is Snoring a Problem?

**T**hough common among many people, snoring is actually a serious problem. One person may be the one who snores, but the unpleasant effects are experienced not just by them, but also by those around them. That is why snoring often creates more issues in daily life. On a more serious note, snoring can also be a health concern, especially in conditions like 'obstructive sleep apnea'. The causes and solutions for snoring differ according to age. Therefore, snoring in children, young adults, and older people needs to be considered separately.

**In Children:** If snoring happens regularly, problems such as enlarged adenoids or tonsils, allergies, or nasal blockage may be suspected. The primary treatment is usually using nasal sprays as prescribed by a doctor. If tonsils or adenoids are enlarged, they may need to be removed. In addition, children should be given pillows of proper height for sleeping and dust or other allergy-causing conditions in the home should be avoided.

**In Young Adults:** Snoring here is usually caused by bad habits and unhealthy lifestyles- such as obesity, alcohol consumption or smoking. Solutions include reducing body weight, avoiding alcohol and cigarettes, not overeating before sleep, and choosing the correct sleeping position.

**In Older Adults:** Snoring often becomes a daily habit. However, at this age, it can lead to respiratory diseases, heart problems, and sleep apnea. A sleep study may be required to check if breathing stops during sleep. Using CPAP (Continuous Positive Airway Pressure) machines under medical advice, sleeping with the head elevated, maintaining regular sleep schedules, and practicing exercise and relaxation are all recommended.

Snoring can happen in anyone's life for different reasons. But ignoring it can lead to dangerous health problems. The most important step is to identify the actual cause of snoring and treat it accordingly.

(Source: Internet)



# The Connection Between Spirituality and Mental Health

**M**ental health is an essential part of human life. Just like physical health, mental health has equal importance, as proven today by medical science and psychology. At the same time, spirituality is a force that shapes a person's inner life. These two areas are closely connected.

Spirituality does not only mean religious practices; it also includes the search for the meaning of life, faith in higher values, peace of mind, and compassion toward others. Spiritual practices like prayer, meditation, yoga, and service calm the mind and help regulate emotions such as sadness, anxiety, and anger. One of the greatest contributions of spirituality to mental health is stress management. Studies show that those who follow a spiritual lifestyle face challenges with greater peace of mind. They see the crises in life as part of a 'larger plan,' which helps them move forward without losing hope.

Moreover, spirituality strengthens social bonds. Gatherings in places of worship, group meditation, and ser-

vice activities increase social support. Maintaining good relationships reduces loneliness and depression. Psychologists say that a spiritual life provides the mind with an 'inner center' - a source of mental strength that helps one remain stable in the face of uncertainty and change. Thus, spirituality and mental health share a mutually nourishing relationship.

Spirituality calms the human inner world, gives life a sense of purpose, and strengthens mental health. Whether it is religious, personal, or meditative practice, spirituality is a valuable path to maintaining mental well-being. Therefore, just as physical health is important, spiritual practices must also be given importance in life for mental health.

Mental health is equally important as physical health in human life. Just as strength and wellness are essential for the body, balance and stability must be preserved for the mind. If mental health is lost, life becomes joyless and purposeless. Alongside this, spirituality - or the search for life's inner meaning, and



a value-based worldview- gives the human mind special strength and peace.

In today's fast-paced, competitive world, mental health issues such as stress, depression, anxiety, and loneliness are on the rise. Along with medical treatment and counseling, spirituality has become a natural way to heal the human mind. Whether religious, meditative, service-oriented, or personal introspection, spirituality provides strong support for mental health.

Spirituality is understood differ-

ently by different people. For some, it is limited to religious beliefs and rituals; for others, it is a journey to discover life's deeper meaning and purpose. The core of spirituality is nurturing peace, compassion, concern for the well-being of others, unity with nature, and awareness of the inner self.

Those who lead a spiritual life often spend time in prayer, meditation, yoga, chanting, service, and self-reflection. These practices calm the human mind and develop positive outlooks toward

## Different Practical Ways of Spirituality

- Lightens the burden of the mind through heartfelt communication with God.
- Calms the thoughts and enhances self-awareness.
- Develops harmony between body and mind.
- Reduces selfishness and nurtures compassion.
- Connection with nature is excellent for mental health.





life. One of the main factors affecting mental health is stress. Spiritual practices- especially meditation, prayer, and breathing exercises- have been scientifically proven to reduce stress. During meditation, the body's hormonal responses change, and stress hormones such as cortisol decrease.

People with spiritual faith show greater resilience and hope in the face of crises such as loss, illness, or financial difficulties. They view problems as 'part of a divine plan' and continue forward

without falling into despair.

Spirituality also teaches people to accept themselves. It gives them the ability to love life despite their imperfections and failures. This self-confidence is essential for mental health. Those who live spiritually also value relationships more. Collective worship, service activities, and group meditation strengthen social support. Good relationships are essential for mental health.

Psychology and medical science have conducted many studies on the positive effects of spirituality on mental health. Research in the U.S., Europe, and Asia has shown that people who practice spirituality experience better outcomes in depression, anxiety, and addiction recovery. Furthermore, studies have found that people who meditate regularly have increased gray matter density in the brain, which helps with memory, decision-making, and emotional regulation.

In Kerala's socio-cultural context, spirituality plays an important role. Different religions, rituals, spiritual gatherings, temples, mosques, churches and gurukulas have all become spaces that support mental health.

In short, spirituality creates an inner world of peace within the human mind. It gives strength to remain steady amid life's uncertainties and challenges. Spiritual practices provide life with purpose and hope.

Therefore, just as physical health must be preserved, spirituality must be cultivated for mental health as well. By giving importance to spiritual practices in education, workplaces and families, it is possible to build a healthy and happy society.



# Achieve Financial Freedom

The importance of money cannot be underestimated. As long as we live, money remains relevant, since most of our needs are fulfilled through it. That is why financial freedom is essential for every individual. Financial freedom means having sufficient income, savings and investments to meet daily expenses and future goals. In simple terms, it is the ability to make one's own choices without being controlled by money. Let us see why financial freedom is important.

Financial problems are one of the biggest causes of mental stress. Steady savings help reduce that burden, and thus financial freedom plays a key role in lowering worry and anxiety. Every human desires freedom. Financial dependence is like shackles on our independence. Financial freedom is a declaration of true freedom - it gives us the ability to decide about work, place of living and lifestyle on our own terms.

With financial freedom, one does not have to spend their whole life working only for money. Instead, more time can be given to family and personal interests. It also provides resilience





in unexpected situations such as illness or job loss. Even in old age, one can live a safe, worry-free retirement.

Now let us look at how financial freedom can be achieved:

**Develop the Right Mindset-** Avoid wasting money on temporary pleasures and focus on saving for long-term benefits.

**Increase Income-** Develop skills in your main profession to earn higher income. Explore side businesses, freelancing or other sources of extra income. Look for income-generating avenues such as investments, rental properties or online businesses.

**Create a Budget and Control Expenses-** Record all expenses. Follow the 50-30-20 rule: 50% for needs, 30% for wants, and 20% for savings. Avoid lifestyle inflation- do not increase expenses as income grows.

**Get Out of Debt-** Pay off high-interest debts first (like credit cards and personal loans). Either clear small debts first for motivation or pay off high-interest ones first to reduce burden.

**Save and Invest-** Build an emergency fund. Invest in stocks, mutual funds, property, or retirement accounts. Automate savings and investments so that they happen regularly without delay.

**Protect Wealth-** Take insurance for health, life and assets. Prepare a will to ensure family security.

**Think Long Term-** Even small investments made early can grow significantly due to compound interest. Define life goals-house, travel, retirement and plan financial decisions accordingly. Spend less than you earn, invest consistently, avoid debt and grow wealth. This is the way to achieve true financial independence.







# Nurturing Children's Mental Health

**Encourage children to look into the mirror each day and speak positive affirmations. Even while brushing their teeth in the morning, such practice can be incorporated.**

Parents play the most important role in the growth and future of their children. A child's mind, character and confidence are shaped within the family environment. Even the small things that parents pay attention to in daily life greatly influence a child's mental health. In today's busy lifestyle, it is the responsibility of parents to provide stability and calmness to their children's minds.

Good parenting habits practiced consistently not only strengthen children's mental health but also boost their confidence, relationships and enthusiasm for learning. Even when children display high levels of intelligence, many are seen to have weak mental health. The fact that teenagers commit suicide because of exam failure, unsuccessful love or rejection in friendships shows that their mental health is fragile and that they suffer from emotional imbalance. In such situations, it becomes essential for parents to provide emotional support from childhood so that children grow into individuals who can face challenges on their own.

So, what should parents do?

A study conducted in 1997 by Gottman, Katz, and Hooven stated that parents should understand and guide their children's emotions. Parents who are sensitive to their children's feelings



help them develop self-control, emotional closeness and focus. For this reason, encourage children to openly share their emotional experiences. For example, when they fail an exam, score lower than expected, or get ridiculed by others, they go through particular emotional states. Ask them how they felt during that time, help them express and recognize those emotions and teach them both the positive and negative sides of those feelings. Guide them in managing and overcoming emotions. If children are trained from a young age to share their feelings without hiding them, they will grow up with the ability to manage emotions and communicate openly in life.

Parents should also help children find solutions to problems. If children





get stuck in a situation, instead of immediately stepping in to solve it, parents should give them the chance to think of possible solutions and decide how to resolve it. This helps them develop the ability to face and overcome problems independently. Parents should intervene only in situations where children truly cannot handle it themselves. If parents solve every problem during childhood, children may struggle to make important decisions later in life.

Children also learn many things through observation. Often, they model the way their parents handle challenges. The way parents react during emergencies becomes a learning example. If parents deal with difficulties calmly and positively, children too will naturally adopt a similar approach.

Always train children to speak positively. Children tend to slip into negative thoughts and conversations easily. Therefore, encourage them to think positively and speak with confidence. The first step towards this is to create a culture of positive communication at home.

Encourage children to look into the mirror each day and speak positive affirmations. Even while brushing their teeth in the morning, such practice can be incorporated. Daily physical exercise also helps maintain good mood and reduce stress. Physical activity generates energy, so it is important to give priority to personal well-being. Family activities like walking together or playing games together have a constructive impact on children.





# Lessons Not to Forget

The things we say may be forgotten by others. But the experiences we give them- joy, sorrow, disappointment, anger- those are never forgotten. That's why, when we hear someone's name or remember their face, the emotions they gave us come rushing back to our minds.

Over thinking never does any good. Problems won't be solved just by excessive thinking; instead, over thinking can create many new problems. Fear often holds us back from doing things. Yet, the very things we hesitate to do out of fear are often the ones that lead us to the greatest growth. If we keep standing still in fear, we can achieve nothing. Do the thing you are afraid of- that is how success comes.

Happiness is not what is seen outwardly. Just because someone smiles doesn't mean they are truly happy inside. Happiness is created in the mind. Forgiving someone is not a favor we do for them, nor does it simply set them free. More than freeing them, forgiveness sets us free.

Life will not always go according to plan; it will bring us many unexpected turns. Negative people drain life out of you, so choose your relationships wisely. A grateful heart can turn even small things into blessings. Whatever you keep repeating to yourself, your mind will eventually believe. Speak well, think well and good things will happen in your life.

Failure does not mean you are weak- it means you are trying. Do not end anything just because you failed once.

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