

## NO

**70. "To Don'ts" Are More Important Than "To-Dos"** My friend Dennis is a prominent educator. A few years ago he received a huge \$\$\$ grant—and he was given the opportunity to roll out his program across the country. Suddenly, he was required to turn his innovative ideas into a system that could be replicated by "ordinary people." Dennis is "one of those people" who has 10 ideas a minute—moreover, all 10 are usually *good* ideas. And so his talented staff ran around madly working on exciting this or exciting that. But now he had that "low variation" system to run—and things promised to be different. I attended a meeting of his advisory Committee at a critical moment. The Chairman had been CEO of an enormous firm. I will always remember a single line that emerged from the fellow's mouth:

*"Dennis, you need a 'to-don't' list."*

In simple language: What you decide *not* to do is probably *more* important than what you decide to do. (A lot of smart-wise people agree on this, super-coach Marshall Goldsmith, the gold standard, among them.) But you probably can't work on "to-don't" alone—you need a sounding board/mentor/advisor/nag you trust to act as a Drill Sergeant who will frog-march you to the woodshed when you stray and start doing those time-draining "to don'ts." (Said advisor could be spouse, professional coach, other, need not be expert in your world, and must be totally trusted.)

**71. Some Things Worth Doing Are Worth Doing Not Particularly Well.** The reminder came one night as I was doing dishes. I was dealing with a particularly resistant old baking pan. I cleaned up the food residue—it was fully sanitary. But there was some crusty crap left, which I went after with a vengeance—but somewhat unsuccessfully. At one point I started laughing at myself. The pan was sanitary and "clean enough," plus I really didn't need to treat the effort like a speech to Fortune 50 CEOs.

The micro-event (*I did* stop) reminded me of the Greater Truth. In a world (personal, professional) of limited resources (time, in this instance, time in most instances) and priorities of the utmost importance (to you and me at any rate), there's a lot of "stuff" that must be done—but for which "good enough" *is* in fact good enough. For some of us making the distinction is easier said than done—and the cost for not figuring out the difference is high.