



**Dear Friends and Clients,**

I love sitting in a train compartment, sipping a glass of wine and glancing at the scenery as we read or chat. In February, we took the overnight train from Washington to Chicago.

We sat reading in bed as we rode through Benjamin Franklin's adopted state, Pennsylvania. As we traveled, I skipped around within my reading materials, moving from a self-help book, to periodicals, to a novel. In that brief time I came across three references to Franklin, who, in addition to being a journalist, scientist and Founding Father, was Speaker of the Pennsylvania Assembly in the 1760s.

I was reminded, however, that in my life Franklin was a huge influence because of the way that he coached himself into living a successful life. As a kid, I read his autobiography, in which described his efforts to turn himself into a man who would do well by doing good. Riding in the train, I remembered that "aha" moment when I realized that we can shape ourselves into the kind of people we want to be.

One of the many ways that Franklin helped form the American character was through his posthumously published memoirs, written in part to teach his fellow citizens how to grow into their full potential. In Franklin's view, practice and a little help from our friends can make us better, more successful people. And that is what I will discuss in this issue.

**Warm wishes, Bev**

**Learn From Ben Franklin  
-- His Tips Are Timeless**

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Benjamin Franklin had only two years of formal schooling, but he educated himself to become a leading American thinker, an extraordinary innovator and a major Enlightenment figure.

As a teenager, Franklin methodically taught himself to write and speak well. He read essays in leading English journals, took brief notes, then later recreated the essays in his own words. Franklin found ways to develop his skill sets and later he found ways to teach others to do the same thing.

In his days as a printer, Franklin published “Poor Richard's Almanack,” which is best remembered for the maxims that he scattered throughout each annual issue. Franklin borrowed wisdom from the classics and folklore and restated it in pithy, succinct prose. He shared his philosophy of self-management with gems like these:

- A good example is the best sermon.
- Diligence is the mother of good luck.
- Search others for their virtues, thy self for thy vices.
- He's a fool that cannot conceal his wisdom.
- No gains without pains

In his autobiography, Franklin described the way that, as a young man, he attempted to systemically shape certain of his own standards of behavior. He undertook, he said, a “bold and arduous Project of arriving at moral Perfection.”

In the course of this self-help project, Franklin listed thirteen “virtues” he wanted to develop. Then he created a book with columns for each day of the week, in which he marked with black spots any offenses against each virtue.

Franklin, speaking of these early efforts with a sense of humor, said that he eventually realized that perfection cannot be attained. Nevertheless, he felt better and happier because of his attempt. Among the characteristics Franklin worked on were:

- **Order** – “Let all your things have their places; let each part of your business have its time.” (Franklin said that this was the toughest “virtue” for him.)
- **Resolution**—“Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve.”
- **Frugality**—“Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself; i.e., waste nothing.”
- **Industry**—“Lose no time; be always employed in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions.”
- **Sincerity**—“Use no hurtful deceit; think innocently and justly, and, if you speak, speak accordingly.”

Franklin understood that self-improvement is more likely to be successful if you have a support group. He formed a “club of mutual improvement,” known as the “JUNTO,” which met once a week for many years. Members discussed moral and political issues and undertook civic projects, like creation of the city's first

subscription library. Members also looked for ways to help each other's businesses and general welfare.

**Want to read more about Franklin?** You can download a free copy of "**Benjamin Franklin – His Autobiography**" from many places, including directly onto your Kindle. Among the many biographies consider "**Benjamin Franklin – An American Life,**" by Walter Isaacson.