

## Be kind, be honest, work hard



Five years ago my life changed with the birth of my first grand-baby—Benjamin. I now embrace the unassailable truth that grandchildren are God’s reward for not having killed your own. This picture was taken at my vineyard; Benjamin and I had just enjoyed a day together, playing and working and we were musing over the result.



Here’s a picture of a necklace that I had when I was a child. I wore it periodically during the first 18 years of my life. I can’t remember where it came from or if it had any special meaning. The necklace is made from three colored pieces of acrylic—green, orange, and white—cut in the shape of a scalene triangle.

I have shown it to Benjamin and told him it will become his when he turns ten. Until then, I let him wear it occasionally and I’m going to use the necklace to teach him three important life lessons.

I have assigned each color a meaning: green represents *be kind*, orange means *be honest*, and white is a reminder to *work hard*. In the next five years he and I will talk a lot about these three virtues; hopefully they

will become a permanent part of his life.

## **Be kind**

Benjamin, be kind to everyone, all of the time. Don't pick and choose who you will be kind to, or when. Be kind to everyone, especially those who may feel marginalized or out of place. And be kind all of the time, because it's the right thing to do and everyone needs a kind word or deed.

Being kind can take on many forms, most of them pleasant, but sometimes being kind means telling someone the truth, even though the truth may temporarily cause pain, or saying "no" to someone who wants to hear a "yes."

## **Be honest**

B, always tell the truth. Always. It's the right thing to do and honesty is a gift that we can give to others. Once people realize that you are always honest, they will have confidence in you. Honesty also involves being authentic; be who you are, not what other people want you to be.

## **Work hard**

Benjamin, this suggestion may seem odd and out of place, but it's important to me and I hope it will be to you. Growing up, my father never worked and that created hardship and embarrassment for our family. So a good work ethic has always been a priority to me. Work hard and work smart. Some people work primarily with their hands, others work with their minds. Both are necessary and legitimate. I hope you'll learn some type of manual labor because it will teach you good lessons. If you're a knowledge worker, stay fresh; be a lifelong learner. Balance hard work with times of relaxation and reflection.

There are many benefits derived from work: it provides a social network, helps organize your life, gives you purpose, keeps your talents and skills sharp and in use, and it will help sustain your confidence.

Someday, give this necklace to your child or grandchild and compose your own meanings for the three colors.