

# THE SET FREE LIFE

## Kick the Sleeping

I recently spent a Saturday engrossed in the 1989 film "Lean on Me," starring Morgan Freeman, about controversial Eastside High School principal Joe Clark. Clark came to Paterson, New Jersey in 1982 when Eastside was an out-of-control death trap filled with drugs, crime, and hopelessness. He took over like the drill sergeant he once was. He fired those who didn't agree with him. He expelled students who were what he called "miscreants," a word not often used today, but so appropriate: it means vicious and depraved. He demanded excellence.

In reality, Clark was considered wildly tyrannical and inflexible. Parents and students either loved him or detested him. Morgan Freeman makes you hope that Joe Clark must have been just as portrayed: hard because he had to be and laying down the law unflinchingly because children's futures were at stake. He makes you wish Joe Clark had been *your* high school principal.

The movie is uplifting and has messages on so many levels: people viewed and treated as animals become animalistic in their behavior. Mob mentality takes over when there is no authority. Establishing authority is lonely; it takes enormous confidence because unpopular decisions must be made and executed without apology. Submitting to authority yields positive outcomes, even when it may not appear to be serving the highest and best interests. Miscreants hate freedom and will search out those who express it to silence them. Acting like you are free makes others want to put you in jail, but it's also a virus: it spreads and begins to infect even the most disadvantaged with a desire for freedom.

Some years ago after viewing it I got curious and I did a search on MySpace for folks who would have been students at Eastside during Joe Clark's tenure. (Facebook was just a baby then.) I found Gregory. I sent him an email, asking him if he'd be willing to tell me how he felt about Mr. Clark. This was his response (edited a bit for clarity):

"I can say for myself that it was a great chance to have him in my life. Some teachers didn't care if we came to class or not. I think the few who felt destroyed by him were just being held accountable for their lack of interest in teaching. He was a little overbearing to some and a welcomed force for others—I say that because the school was being run by drug-dealing teachers and

students who had no good intentions for others. . . . I had both of my parents all my life, but he was like my father away from home. And to some students he was their father and mentor. One story I remember most: I was late for class due to basketball practice. Running to get to class, I left my book in my locker. He came in the class and checked everyone's books and I didn't have mine. As a star basketball player, he suspended me for the day and a game, and I was upset about it. But he sat and talked with me about why he had to do it. It taught me a lesson: for him, school was a lot more important than basketball [and I should see it that way, too]."

Joe Clark taught his students to act like free persons, repudiating the messages pressed upon them that they could not succeed, did not have the ability to make right choices, would not apply their talents. He knew that free people are not free because they can do anything they want; they are free because they can choose to do what is uncomfortable and unsatisfying in order to obtain a greater goal. They *freely* choose to invest their efforts in the good and the necessary and the right. They know the consequences and have the power to choose what is worthy and lasting. Those who are enslaved by their surroundings have no backbone. They are not free, even if they imagine they are.

True freedom is epic and inspirational, just like true leadership. Joe Clark may have needed some lessons in tenderness and graciousness, but he was a free man. He was unmoved by the forces that would have kept him from doing what he knew had to be done. He respected his purpose: at that particular moment in those particular lives, what was needed was someone so mad at miscreant evil that he was willing to kick the sleeping and demand they act like free people. That's a strong feature of authentic leadership: it inspires those who really want to change and infuses them with the sense that this just might be their ticket to freedom.

Are you living a Set Free Life? ☺

### Quick Links

Joe Clark

Adopt-A-Greyhound

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*Sue Thompson is a personality expert, etiquette trainer, and an instructor in life lessons. Her work on recognizing and developing talent, identifying personalities and working effectively with the people who possess them, responding appropriately to difficult experiences, treating others with respect, and behaving like a professional have caused companies and business organizations throughout the country to value her consulting skills. She trains those entering the workforce how to present themselves with style and authority; new employees in the importance of respecting one's work and the workplace; managers in the value of understanding employees' talent and temperament; and everyone in the timeless rules of behavior that will always bespeak excellence.*

# Teddy Bear Says...



Dogs know when people like them, and they have a sixth sense for those they can trust. We've been wrong on occasion, but we pick up something that doesn't seem to register with humans. We gravitate toward those who love dogs, and we distance ourselves from those who don't.

Humans, too, prefer to work with, play with, and generally interact with those they trust and who seem to like them. All too often, however, this guiding principle is ignored by people in business who believe no one should care how they act. These are the folks who provide a service—something for which *you are paying*—who think nothing of expressing rudeness, impatience, or arrogance, and expect you to ignore this and contin-

ue partaking of their services. They see no need to dress with any degree of professionalism, because they feel the customer or client should not regard their clothing as an indication of their worth.

Of course, this is true: how one is clothed is not an indication of one's worth. But it *is* an indication of the respect one has for the customer or client, as is the way they act. In many instances, service providers do not seem to know how to relate to customers or clients with courtesy or even friendliness. They may act appropriately for a bit, until a conversation gets a bit testy or the customer/client expresses some frustration; then there's a sudden shift to the aggressive position of putting customers in their place with a superior attitude.

Some clients can be real jerks. (The Bear could tell you about some dogs with whom she has been acquainted.) Nasty, unkind, unsympathetic—the list could go on. But somewhere along the line there's been a shift in which more and more service providers seem to care less and less about the messages they are sending with their behavior and their appearance. From the rude technical “assistance” person at the cell phone store who, when you start to lose patience with explaining for the fifth time the problem with your device, gives you a sharp glance and says, “Look, I don't have to help you—I'm on a break,” to the intemperate receptionist in the doctor's office who speaks to you as though you are a child deserving a time-out, the whole idea of “the customer is always right” has taken a sharp turn toward hell.

Teddy Bear knows customers are not always right. Sometimes ill-mannered clients deserve to be fired. But in general, day to day interactions with those whose jobs have titles such as “customer service” or “sales assistant” or even “receptionist” (the root of which is *to receive*) should be trained in the art of graciously bearing sometimes unbearable customers. This is good business, and Teddy Bear wonders why businesses want to drive people away with the you-have-no-right-to-treat-me-that-way employee. Get over it. Sometimes you have to take a little guff. The person unloading on you may just have found out a child has cancer. He may have been laid off and is consumed with worry. She may be an idiot. Keep smiling and be a good representative of your service-providing employer. People return to the places where they are liked, treated kindly, and get their bellies rubbed.

The belly rub is optional, certainly, but goes a long way with me.



Once you find your *raison d'etre*, you will feel fulfilled. It would be fraudulent not to share it with me and the other individuals around you the greatness—and yes, it is greatness—that is in your soul.

Joe Clark

Contact Sue today to learn how she can meet your business needs

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## Don't Miss Out!

Seats will soon be filled for the Philadelphia session of “Image is Everything—Except When It's Not: How What You Do is Almost as Important as Who You Are,” scheduled for May 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> at the Philadelphia Airport Marriott! This exhilarating workshop will give you the tools you need to become a person of interest and begin developing the best and most powerful reflection of what you have to offer.

This workshop is designed for YOU! Prepare yourself for success in every visible way by:

- Assessing your strengths and talents, considering ways to maximize them effectively
- Building up your written and verbal communication skills
- Increasing your confidence in social situations
- Cultivating a positive physical image with clothing, style, and deportment
- Enriching your dining etiquette knowledge
- And a whole lot more!

“Power-packed” may be a cliché, but it accurately describes the punch this workshop is intended to provide! Decide that *today* is the day to begin investing in your future by starting with how you present yourself to the world.

Early-bird discounts of 20% are still in effect! As well, members of the *Set Free Life* mailing list are entitled to a further 10% discount by entering the code “LIST” at checkout; so are members of IFMA (who should, appropriately, enter the code “IFMA”). In addition to Philadelphia, the workshop is scheduled for Los Angeles, Chicago, and Dallas.

(Pssst: pass the opportunity on to friends—they, too, may use the “LIST” discount, even if they aren't list participants. Such a deal!)

Seating is limited to only 25 people per workshop who are inspired by the opportunity to grow and improve! Reserve your place today by clicking on the link below! 🐾

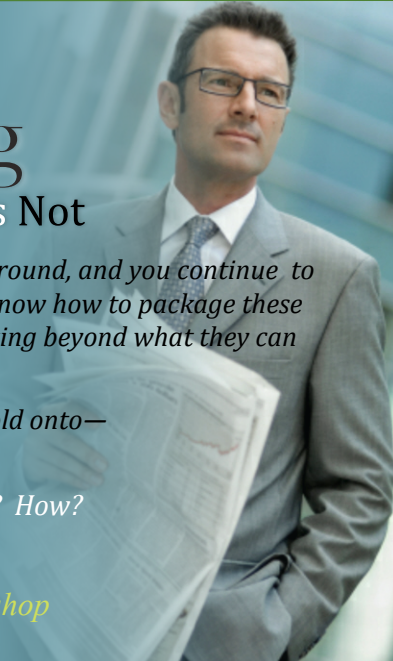
## Image is Everything Except When it's Not

*You've got the education and background, and you continue to develop your skills. But unless you know how to package these assets, few will be interested in looking beyond what they can see to find out what's inside!*

*Employers are looking for—and hold onto—quality and excellence.*

*Do they know you possess it? How?*

*Click to learn more about this exciting workshop*



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