



When Your Greatest Gift Becomes Your Greatest Challenge

The Wisdom of Balance in the Second Half of Life

Yes, I have “paid” a high price *for being overly tolerant and trusting!*

Most of us are/were taught to identify our strengths — the qualities that make us good people, reliable friends, and caring contributors. Tolerance. Trust. Compassion. Loyalty. Perseverance.

But what if the very qualities we are most proud of are also the ones quietly limiting our freedom, health, or joy?

In this next chapter of life, many of us are discovering a deeper truth:

A gift without balance can become a burden.

This does not mean our virtues are wrong. It means they are incomplete without deep discernment and courage to bend.

THE TWO SIDES OF EVERY STRENGTH

More than two thousand years ago, Aristotle taught that virtue lives in balance, not in extremes. He called this the “Golden Mean” — the understanding that every strength has two edges.

Courage lives between fear and recklessness.

Generosity lives between scarcity and self-depletion.

The same is true for the virtues many of us have lived-by all our lives.

Tolerance, when balanced, allows us to adapt, forgive, and make peace.

Tolerance, when unexamined, can teach us to endure what slowly harms us.

Trust, when balanced, opens the door to cooperation and connection.

Trust, when disconnected from inner guidance, can lead us to ignore our intuition — sometimes at great cost.

WHEN GOODNESS TURNS AGAINST US

Psychologist Carl Jung offered a powerful insight: whatever quality we identify with too strongly creates a shadow. Not because the quality is bad — but because it is unquestioned.

Those who pride themselves as being “easygoing” may avoid necessary conflict.

Those who are deeply compassionate may rescue others while neglecting themselves.

Those who trust may silence their own inner warnings in favor of authority or approval.

Can you identify?

In these cases, the virtue will fail as it goes unbalanced.

A COMMON EXAMPLE MANY OF US KNOW

Consider health decisions.

A trusting person may sense something is not right with a diagnosis or treatment. Yet instead of listening inward, they defer completely to authority: “The doctor must know best.”

Sometimes that trust is well placed. Sometimes it is not.

Discernment does not reject expertise — it partners it with intuition. This can be very challenging especially in critical situations.

Trust matures when it includes discernment.

FROM SURVIVAL SKILL TO SOUL WISDOM

What once helped us survive may now be asking to evolve.

During my recent 12-day hospital stay following life-saving surgery, I was given an unexpected mirror. I believed I had learned to speak up for myself — but I realized I was still doing it too gently, too patiently, and too cautiously. My old habit of being overly tolerant quietly put my health at risk.

For weeks I clearly described physical symptoms that something was wrong. After four medical visits, the tests I requested were dismissed. On Friday, December 12th, I made one last attempt. When nothing changed, something inside me finally said, *Enough*.

Two days later, on Sunday, December 14th, I drove myself to the emergency room. This time the right tests were ordered. Within hours I was told I needed emergency surgery. The surgeon explained I had only a short window of time — and asked for my consent to move forward. I said yes. And I lived.

Even after surgery, my lesson continued. With tubes and IVs attached, I was completely dependent on others. Yet I hesitated to press the call button. I didn't want to "bother" anyone. More than once I waited too long and made my own recovery harder. One nurse finally looked at me and said firmly, "You need to ask for what you need — immediately. Your healing depends on it."

My children gently confirmed what I was beginning to see: my tolerance had crossed the line into self-neglect. And strangely enough, I felt grateful. Because awareness is the doorway to change.

I am learning that true compassion includes myself. That respect does not mean silence. That clarity is not unkindness.

Growth now asks a gentler — and truer — question:

What would balance look like? Not harsh... but honest. Not tolerant... but lovingly clear. Not waiting... but wisely responding.

And that, dear friends, is soul wisdom in action.

A REFLECTION FOR THIS BLOG

What am I very good at?

Where has this quality served me well?

Where has this same quality cost me?

What would it mean to keep this gift — without sacrificing myself?

This chapter in life is not about becoming cynical or critical of our gifts. It is about becoming wiser in how we live them.

There are moments when tolerance, trust, or patience quietly cost us — when we are not heard, when our inner knowing is set aside, or when our goodness is mistaken for permission. These experiences can be painful, but they are also instructive.

Growth asks us to express our gifts with greater clarity and courage — to speak our truth firmly, to honor our inner knowing, and to no longer allow our wisdom to fall flat or be overlooked.

This reflection is offered not as judgment, but as awareness — an invitation to live our gifts differently, with balance and self-respect.

When our gifts are balanced by discernment, boundaries, and inner listening, they no longer require our suffering to prove their value.

Sincerely,

Barbara

The Circle of Freedom

*Offering inspiring programs that support conscious living, spiritual growth,
and whole-person well-being for those 60 and beyond.*

Your Greatest "Gift" Becomes Your Challenge

Join me for a thoughtful time as we explore this powerful insight together. Share with others as you wish.

 **Tuesday, February 10, 2026**

 **6:30 PM Eastern**

 **FREE Zoom Gathering**

Topic: When Your Greatest Gift Becomes Your Greatest Challenge

A gentle, honest conversation about balance, discernment, and living our gifts wisely in the second half of life.

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86103240060?pwd=wtOqhy4mFO65XXN6oMqHVSCT1tPbbL.1>

Meeting ID: 861 0324 0060

Passcode: Gift

Enjoy from your own home. Bring your curiosity — and your lived wisdom.

I look forward to seeing you.

♥ **Barbara Hribar**