



The Chinese word for crisis is *Wei Gei* - its two symbols stand for danger and opportunity. Yes, it is a time of crisis as so many unrightable wrongs must be addressed, but it is also a time of opportunity. Opportunity to reimagine, recreate, and re-envision our future. Yes, there will be new norms in the coming days, but it is you who will create these not I. It is a time to stop kicking the can down the road and face our dilemmas – and not put our heads in the sand. Truly we have an opportunity like never before, if politics is squashed, to create a new paradigm as we reimagine the future.

Once upon a time in a land called China, there lived an all seeing and all knowing scholar called Confucius. People from all over the land came for sagacious advice and sent their children to study under him.

One day two of his students were so weary of the master seemingly knowing all that they would do, they decided to play a trick on Confucius.

They decided they would approach him and behind their backs in their hands they would each hold a dove. They would ask Confucius what was in their hands. If he answered correctly, they would ask if the doves were alive or dead. They had devised a plan that if he said the birds were alive, they would break their necks, but if he said they were dead, they would free the doves to fly. They thought their plan was foolproof to embarrass the master.

The day came when they approached the master with their plan. They asked the master what was in their hands behind their backs. Confucius thought for a moment, smiled, and said that in their hands were doves. They then asked him if the doves were alive or dead.

Confucius thought for a moment, looked into their eyes and said, *their future is in your hands.*

So too, *your future is in your hands. Choose wisely.*

In these days of uncertainty, choose well, but remember the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson. “What lies before us and what lies behind us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.”

This truly is a time when we must try to understand the qualities of leading and what we have in our depths.

1. *Never ask of others to do what you would not do.*
2. *Learn to listen - as the Italian proverb says, “From listening comes wisdom. From speaking comes repentance.”*
3. *Never denigrate others in public.*
4. *Surround yourself with smart people who will fill your voids and not say yes to curry favor with you. Make sure, however, that they are team players.*
5. *Communicate - communicate.*
6. *Leave your ego at the door.*
7. *Never put your values on other people or societies unless you understand their culture, history, religion, and language.*
8. *Above all, if you want the limelight, remember you must take responsibility for the good and bad. Do not blame others as the buck stops with you.*

Let me end with a saying from one of my mentors, “Aspire to inspire before you expire.”

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alan G. Hassenfeld".

Alan G. Hassenfeld  
Founder  
Hassenfeld Family Initiatives