

# Chop Your Own Firewood and Learn To Juggle: Advice I'm Going To Ignore From "Life's Little Instruction Book"

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"Life's Little Instruction Book," first published in 1991 as a collection of advice from H. Jackson Brown, Jr. to his college-bound son, has sold millions of copies, been translated into 35 languages, and inspired calendars, posters, journals, greeting cards and screensavers.

Not surprisingly, it's a very popular graduation gift.

The latest edition contains plenty of excellent counsel, like "Get a dog" and "Check hotel bills carefully for unexpected charges" along with some that are downright puzzling, like "Steer clear of restaurants that rotate" and "Never buy a beige car." (What kind of awful early encounter with beige cars or rotating restaurants left Brown with this kind of lasting animus?)

Ironically, one piece of advice Brown gives us is "Never give a loved one a gift that suggests they need improvement."

Uh... isn't that this little gift book in a nutshell?

But who am I to argue with a dude who became a multi-millionaire by pithily telling other folks what to do? I've been telling other people how to live their lives for decades, and not only has it not brought me fame and riches, it has earned me a reputation for being a "smart-ass know-it-all."

Although I'll have no trouble following advice like "Never buy a beige car" (I may be a mild-mannered librarian, but I love my red Toyota.) there are some words of wisdom here that I plan to ignore:

Avoid sarcastic remarks.  
Do 100 push-ups every day.  
Get up 30 minutes earlier.  
Never miss an opportunity to ride a roller coaster.  
Learn a card trick.  
Attend class reunions  
Never use profanity.  
Remember peoples' names.  
Learn how to fix a leaky toilet.  
Never go to bed with dirty dishes in the sink.  
Don't gossip.  
Try everything offered by supermarket demonstrators.  
Read the Bible cover to cover.  
Never eat the last cookie.  
When attending meetings, sit in front.  
Cut your own firewood.  
Learn to juggle.  
Don't let anyone see you go back more than twice for the peeled shrimp.

Of course, I might be able to whittle this list down a bit, with some creative off-setting.

For instance, I'd be up for sitting in the front at meetings, if I can juggle and make sarcastic remarks.

And can I gossip about people as long as I correctly remember their names?

I have to admit that the challenge of doing card tricks on a roller coaster appeals to me.

Not to mention attempting to juggle while chopping firewood. (And - if I survive -- what a fun talent to show off at the next class reunion!)

On the other hand, some things are just non-starters. I am, by nature, a last-cookie-grabber. And after I've enjoyed that cookie, I'm going to put the plate it was served on in the sink with the other dirty dishes and go to bed.

But I'm guessing I could manage to rise from my bed 30 minutes early to do 100-push-ups or even fix the toilet, as long as I could employ plenty of profanity.

Anyway, as delightful as it is to dream up these little scenarios, now you'll have to excuse me. I'm off to read the Bible cover to cover while gobbling peeled shrimp in a rotating restaurant.

