

A Week in Images and Quotes

May - 2026

I think what matters most is that a doctor sees themselves as a work in progress and views medical education as something that should continue throughout an entire career.

Alexandra Sifferlin in an interview on Courtney Martin's Substack – *The Examined Family* on April 29, 2026



*The day you're born, they sign a piece of paper
That will certify the date of your birth
And the day you die, they sign another
Just to prove you've gone back to the earth
And between those two pieces of paper
There is the truth that is so hard to find
And the story of your life is written
But you must read in between the lines.*

Ernest Hemingway was the topic of a recent acrostic puzzle so I thought I would look up a few quotes attributed to him that might be of use to me.

- *My aim is to put down on paper what I see and what I feel in the best and simplest way.*
- *We are all apprentices in a craft where no one ever becomes a master.*
- *There is nothing noble in being superior to your fellow men. True nobility lies in being superior to your former self.*

- *People are usually more convinced by reasons they discovered themselves than by those found by others.*
- *Nature is an infinite sphere of which the center is everywhere and the circumference nowhere.*
- *Faith embraces many truths which seem to contradict each other. Blaise Pascal*

On my walk today I listened to a song by Steve Goodman, *Between the Lines*. Here are the opening lines.



FRIDAY

01

SATURDAY

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- *It takes courage, of course, to step out of the fray, as it takes courage to do anything that's necessary, whether tending to a loved one on her deathbed or turning away from the sugarcoated doughnut.*
- *Writing is how I find out what I believe and what I care most deeply about. It's how I sort through the mess of daily experience and try to make sense of it – by stepping out of it for a while. Writing is how I train a searchlight into the darker corners of my self and the world, as I'm sure I'd never do otherwise.*
- *I think writing is really about a journey of understanding. So you take something that seems very far away, and the more you write about it, the more you travel into it, and you see it from within.*
- *We have more and more ways to communicate, as Thoreau noted, but less and less to say.*

Pico Iyer

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03

We also need to do a better job of teaching physicians and other clinicians to seek out and engage in these challenging conversations [end-of-life planning]. Let's start by selecting medical school applicants with traits that include curiosity, compassion and emotional courage. These are among the most important conversations of a lifetime, and all doctors should possess the skills and desire to conduct them.

Jessica Nutik Zitter, MD (Guest Essay – My Parents Are in Their Mid-80s. Why Won't They Plan for the End? *NY Times*, May 3, 2026)

When someone tells me "no," it doesn't mean I can't do it, it simply means I can't do it with them. Karen E. Quiones Miller

Connecting with the words from the quote above, I happened upon a source that stated that Frank Herbert received 23 rejections when trying to publish his novel, *Dune*. As most readers know, *Dune* went on to win several prestigious literary awards.

MONDAY

04

TUESDAY

05

We never stop investigating. We are never satisfied that we know enough to get by. Every question we answer leads on to another question. This has become the greatest survival trick of our species. Desmond Morris

IMPERMANENCE

- *The precise person you are now is fleeting, just like all the other people you've been.* David Epstein
- *It is not impermanence that makes us suffer. What makes us suffer is wanting things to be permanent when they are not.* Thích Nhất Hạnh
- *Impermanence is a principle of harmony. When we don't struggle against it, we are in harmony with reality.* Pema Chödrön
- *Everything that you think is solid is actually fleeting and ephemeral.* Joyce Carol Oates

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Two books to consider putting on my reading queue pertaining the grief:

I'm OK That You're Not OK by Megan Devine

Grief Works: Stories of Life, Death and Surviving by Julia Samuel

Parker Palmer used a poem by Naomi Shihab Nye, *Shoulders*, to emphasize his points of view regarding the lack of humanity and narcissistic behavior prevalent among many men and leaders in today's society. I have highlighted several excerpts from her poems elsewhere in my journaling and sought additional insights from this wise individual.

- *Read, Read, and then Read some more. Always Read. Find the voices that speak most to YOU. This is your pleasure and blessing, as well as responsibility.*
- *I love the solitude of reading. I love the deep dive into someone else's story, the delicious ache of a last page.*
- *Mystery: Everything felt better before you got there than when you actually got there. When you actually got there, you didn't quite have the energy to be there.*
- *Sometimes there's no one to listen to what you really might like to say at a certain moment. The paper always listens.*

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I spent the morning putting in a comma and the afternoon removing it.

Gustave Flaubert

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My mom passed away at approximately 5:25 PM on May 11th, six days from her 102nd birthday. Below is a poem I had written several years ago to honor my mom's birthday: May 17, 1924:



A Star Was Born

Our mom has played many roles
Throughout her long years of life:
Mother, Nanna, Sister, Daughter
Neighbor, Aunt, Worker and Wife.

Her love influences us every day.
Her sacrifices know no bounds.
Her dedication to all of us
Is the highest that can be found.

Let us celebrate the day of her birth
On this 17th day of May.

Let us honor her place in our hearts
As we all continue on our way.

Many people have helped form who we are,
But our Mom is the highest, brightest star.



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- *The thing that is really hard, and really amazing, is giving up on being perfect and beginning the work of becoming yourself.*
- *I would be most content if my children grew up to be the kind of people who think decorating consists mostly of building enough bookshelves.*
- *The beginning and the end are never really the journey of discovery for me. It is the middle that remains a puzzle until well into the writing. That's how life is most of the time, isn't it? You know where you are and where you hope to wind up. It's the getting there that's challenging.*

Anna Quindlen

... encouraging society to acknowledge that dementia is rampant, incredibly painful, but also full of sacred lessons about awe, consciousness & unconditional love. Courtney Martin from a recent article she wrote for *Sojourners*.

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At age 87 you have, at best, a few years left before you die, so you had better take your time. Parker Palmer

I am now rereading a book while hearing it narrated at the same time. This causes me to read much more slowly over the words that I had previously read at a faster pace. I am intrigued by quotes that I may have overlooked beginning with the following:

As both a student of history and a man devoted to living in the present, I admit that I do not spend a lot of time imagining how things might otherwise have been. But I do like to think there is a difference between being resigned to a situation and reconciled to it. Spoken by Count Rostov in *Amor Towles A Gentleman in Moscow*, p. 211

***Humility is attentive
patience.***

Simone Weil

WEDNESDAY

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The final wisdom of life requires not the annulment of incongruity but the achievement of serenity within and above it. Reinhold Niebuhr

-
- *Faith is not about finding meaning in the world, there may be no such thing – faith is the belief in our capacity to create meaningful lives.*
 - *What is the most important thing one learns in school? Self-esteem, support, and friendship.*
 - *My voice is born repeatedly in the fields of uncertainty.*

Terry Tempest Williams

[Sally] Susman answered that she learned the value of pausing by making mistakes when she did not pause and instead rushed. She told a story of one such mistake she made “because [she] just didn’t take the time to reflect.”

Located in an online article:
<https://gettysburgian.com/2023/04/sally-susan-lecture-hosted-by-the-eisenhower-institute/>

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Located on Austin Kleon’s Substack on Saturday May 15:

Your assignment this week comes from FBI Special Agent Dale Cooper in Twin Peaks: “Harry, I’m going to let you in on a little secret. Everyday, once a day, give yourself a present. Don’t plan it, don’t wait for it. Just let it happen. It could be a new shirt at the Men’s store. A catnap in your office chair. Or two cups of good, hot black coffee.

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- *You can, you should, and if you're brave enough to start, you will.*
- *If you want to be a writer, you must do two things above all others: read a lot and write a lot.*
- *Books are the perfect entertainment: no commercials, no batteries, hours of enjoyment of each dollar spent. What I wonder is why everybody doesn't carry a book around for those inevitable dead spots in life.*
- *To write is human, to edit is divine.*
- *When you write you tell yourself a story. When you rewrite you take out everything that is NOT the story.*
- *You learn best by reading a lot and writing a lot and the most valuable lessons of all are the ones you teach yourself.* Stephen King

Happy
Birthday
Bob!



MONDAY

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The Russian poet, Vladimir Mayakovsky and writer/journalist Maxim Gorky were highlighted in Amor Towles' *A Gentleman in Moscow*, and I found the quotes below that resonate with me:

- *There's no grandfatherly fondness in me. There are no gray hairs in my soul! Shaking the world with my voice and grinning, I pass you by, - handsome, Twentytwoyearold.*
- *In the church of my heart the choir is on fire.*
- *Let me pave a path with the final tenderness for your footsteps as you depart.* Vladimir Mayakovsky
- *The good qualities in our soul are most successfully and forcefully awakened by the power of art. Just as science is the intellect of the world, art is its soul.*
- *Let us not search for the guilty ones only among others, let us speak the bitter truth: we are all guilty ... each and every one of us.* Maxim Gorky

By including these quotes, I am not condoning all quotes written by these two authors.

WEDNESDAY

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Apart from a brush with our own or others' mortality, or personal experience of caring for a vulnerable person, we push thoughts about old age, vulnerability and death out of our minds. We live in an adolescent, grief- and death-phobic culture that worships youth, strength, growth, and invulnerability. Lisa Sibbett

Section of obituary for my mom composed by my sister, Mary: *Armed with a 10th grade education (she would say, "the college of hard-knocks"), Newfoundland heritage/ wisdom, and a supportive husband who held her in the highest esteem, Cynthia showed by actions and deeds a "shoulder-to-the-wheel" philosophy, where no job was too small, no goal unattainable, no chore procrastinated, no job beneath her, no deadline unmet, no meals uncooked, no home (or kids!) uncleaned, and no sense of duty unfulfilled. She was the daughter of a fisherman, who, not knowing a stroke, rowed his little boat into Bay St. George to pull up his lobster traps, and of a mother who raised 19 children on the food they grew and the fish they caught. Cynthia's deep faith and discipline were honed at the hands of the nuns, who taught at both church and school. Skills were acquired as needed, then elevated to master level. These included work as a business woman (Pancsofar's Bridal Shop), seamstress, photofinisher, cook, upholsterer, and cake decorator.*

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Delights of the Day

- 1) 120/77 BP @ 1:30 PM
- 2) Developmentalist Zoom Workshop by Lois Holzman
- 3) WORDLE IN 2! ... and reading Courtney Martin's Substack entry today
- 4) Working toward the completion of jigsaw puzzle on dining room table
- 5) Successful Blood Pressure appointment
- 6) Started *Lincoln Highway* by Amor Towles
- 7) Finished an extremely complicated jigsaw puzzle of lunch boxes! Well - perhaps not THAT complicated.
- 8) Parker Palmer's Substack posting reflecting on Naomi Shahab Nye's poem, *Shoulders*
- 9) Finished Season 1 of *Irish Blood* on Acorn
- 10) Began my 17-day visit with my mom & dad in North Carolina
- 11) Grandson Leo's birthday
- 12) On his TCNJ radio show, Leo dedicated a Dylan song to his Poppy: *Tangled Up in Blue*
- 13) Nice conversation with Dad in the afternoon, outside on the porch under the big umbrella
- 14) Listening to three excellent presentations during a Zoom Speaker's Bureau meeting facilitated by LiveWell
- 15) Carol and Barbara arrive in NC to help celebrate our mom's life
- 16) Natyra arrives from Boston to help celebrate her nana's passing
- 17) Time with siblings
- 18) Funeral Mass for my mom
- 19) Natyra heads back to Boston - enjoyed her visit here in NC
- 20) Enjoy being in the presence of my dad
- 21) Continue to enjoy being in the presence of my dad
- 22) Participated in editing my mom's obituary
- 23) Allie (my niece) and Matt Thompson welcome Claire into the world
- 24) Happy Birthday to Bob Dylan
- 25) My dad, at 108, asked for a Sudoku puzzle to work on - in earlier years he was an expert in solving challenger level puzzles
- 26) Final walk on a 2-mile loop around Mary's house
- 27) Heading back home to Columbia, CT
- 28) Reviewing the work completed in the basement while I was gone
- 29) Photo of my dad (108) and his newborn great-granddaughter, Claire
- 30) Visit by Nadya, Leo and Randy on their way to Cape Cod
- 31) Comments to Courtney Martin on content of her Substack today

