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Good Grief!

Six Life Lessons From Charlie Brown

By Lisa A. Beach



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With *The Peanuts Movie* now out on DVD and year-round *Peanuts* specials airing on TV, the Peanuts gang is still teaching us life lessons after 65 years. This made me reminisce about my childhood love affair with Charlie Brown, dubbed America's lovable loser. Despite his hairless, pumpkin-size head and a penchant for wearing zigzag shirts, Charlie Brown had me at "good grief!"

Since 1950, that endearing blockhead taught me how to keep getting up when life knocks me down. Brilliant cartoonist Charles M. Schulz channeled his inner Charlie Brown in every comic strip, breathing life into an Everyman character who captured common struggles and imparted insights.

From the classic holiday TV specials to the weekly Sunday comics, here are six life lessons I learned from that resilient, round-headed kid.

1 Find time to laugh every day.

According to Schultz, "Charlie Brown must be the one who suffers, because he's a caricature of the average person. Most of us are much more acquainted with losing than winning. Winning is great, but it isn't funny." Through Charlie Brown's steady stream of struggles and failures, I learned to find humor (often in retrospect) at my own foibles and botched attempts. When things don't go my way and I draw the short straw in life, I often turn to my Sweet Babboo (my husband) and say, "I got a rock" to remind myself to laugh at my streak of Charlie Brown luck.

2 Don't give in to fear.

Just like Charlie Brown, everyone feels afraid at some point. But it's what you do with your fear that matters. Charlie Brown rose above his

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anxieties again and again, facing his fears head-on, one comic-strip-panel at a time. Afraid to quit my job, start a freelance career, be a stay-at-home mom and homeschool my kids? You bet! But like Charlie Brown, I refused to let fear cripple me. Instead, I let fear fuel me.

3 Stick with it. Good ol' Chuck never gave up, even in the face of his overwhelming loser history with kite-eating trees, football-yanking Lucy and the I'm-just-not-that-into-you Little Red-Headed Girl. Despite kite-flying failures, missed punts and unrequited love, Charlie Brown kept at it. With a soft heart and tough spirit, he courageously bounced back every time with an "I-got-this" determination that inspires me.

4 Tap into the power of friendship. If it weren't for the wise and often encouraging words of best friends Linus and Schroeder, Charlie Brown might have tapped out long ago. Instead, he leaned on compassionate, philosophical Linus (described by Schulz as "the house intellectual") and telling-it-like-it-is Schroeder to bolster his spirit. Like any good BFF's, his pals picked him up when he felt down and reminded him to stay true to himself. If we saw Charlie Brown as an adult, he'd probably be hanging out at a sports bar with Linus and Schroeder, sharing a few beers, commiserating over their recent loss on the baseball diamond and talking about girl troubles. And don't even get me

started on the powerful bond between Snoopy and Woodstock. Best. Friendship. Ever.

5 Be kind. As the perpetual fall guy and victim of countless verbal assaults (especially from Lucy), Charlie Brown literally took a beating on a regular basis. But despite it all, he forgave his doubters and tormentors, looked for the good in others and behaved kindly toward them. You didn't see Charlie Brown plotting some evil revenge against his classmates or trash-talking that bully, Lucy. Instead, he epitomized grace.

6 Dream big and pursue your passions. Charlie Brown did not let his terrible win-loss record stop him from playing baseball. He showed up on the pitcher's mound every time purely for his love of the game. This serves as a terrific reminder to keep on writing regardless of how many rejections I might get from publishers, how hard it might be to grow my humor blog or how much I need to learn about tech apps and social media. I love to write, and I believe in myself. End of story.

What are *your* favorite lessons from Charlie Brown and the *Peanuts* gang?

Lisa Beach is a freelance writer, blogger, mother of two teenagers and recovering homeschool mom who lived to write about it. Visit her writer's website at LisaBeachWrites.com and check out TweeniorMoments.com, Lisa's humor blog about midlife, family, friends and all the baggage that goes with it.



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