

What a Chinese parable teaches about life's events



Connie Mason Michaelis
Guest columnist

There is a famous Chinese parable that teaches that events in life cannot be definitively labeled as good or bad because their ultimate consequences are unpredictable.

Here is how the story goes. A Chinese farmer's horse runs away. His neighbors come to lament his misfortune, but the farmer simply says, "Maybe it's good or maybe it's bad." The next day, the horse returns with seven wild horses, seemingly a stroke of luck, and again the farmer responds, "Maybe it's good or maybe it's bad."

Later, his son breaks his leg while breaking one of the wild horses, and the neighbors rush over to say how sorry they are that such a bad thing had happened, yet the farmer says, "Maybe it's bad or maybe it's good."

Finally, military officers come though the land to conscript young men to go and fight a war, but they reject his son from military service due to his injury, which appears fortunate, and the farmer again says, "Maybe it's good or maybe it's bad."

I think this is particularly a principle that becomes more obvious the older you are. How many things in your life that seemed bad when they happened, but after time the blessings of that event become apparent?

A son doesn't make the football team in high school where all of his buddies excel.

But as it turns out he goes out for track and is state champion.

Your daughter doesn't get accepted

into the college of her choice but ends up at a university where she meets the love of her life and marries him.

Life teaches us that our judgments are usually short-sighted, and we have no way of predicting the end result of any action. Time is the interpreter and like the Chinese farmer learned, it's better to live with an open mind. This is particularly true when we judge things as bad. We can go down the rabbit hole of negativity and depression.

Eleanor Roosevelt wisely said, "A mature person is one who does not think only in absolutes, who is able to be objective even when deeply stirred emotionally, who has learned that there is both good and bad in all people and in all things, and who walks humbly and deals charitably with the circumstances of life, knowing that in this world no one is all knowing and therefor all of us need both love and charity."

It's not hard to imagine the personality of a person who always keeps an open mind to the circumstances around them. They would be patient, calm, agreeable and altogether pleasant. Whereas the opposite personality would be critical, irritated, judgmental and difficult to be around.

I guess we have a choice to make if we want to be the kind of mature person Eleanor speaks of and it starts with having an open mind.

Age and time should give us all kinds of experiences that teach this valuable lesson. Is it good or is it bad? Who knows for sure?

In the meantime, we can withhold our predictions of what the future will bring.

Find Connie's books "Daily Cures: Wisdom for Healthy Aging" and "The Way Grandmothers Are" at www.just-nowoldenough.com.

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Monday, March 23, the 82nd day of 2026. There are 283 days left in the year. On this date in:

1775: Patrick Henry, a U.S. founding father, declared to the Second Virginia Convention: "Give me liberty or give me death."

1806: Meriwether Lewis and William Clark began their return trip from the Pacific coast along the Columbia River by canoes after they had made the first U.S. exploration of the West. That exploration was commissioned by President Thomas Jefferson to map the newly acquired territory of the Louisiana Purchase.

1868: The University of California was founded in Oakland.

1916: Jamaican-born activist and separatist Marcus Garvey arrived in the United States, where he later organized the country's first Black nationalist movement.

1919: Italian autocrat Benito Mussolini, who later became the first fascist dictator, founded the paramilitary organization that was later reorganized as the National Fascist Party.

1956: Pakistan became the world's first Islamic republic after British India was granted independence.

1965: Gemini III became America's first multi-person, Earth-orbiting spacecraft. Air Force Lt. Col. Virgil "Gus" Grison and Navy Lt. Cmdr. John W. Young completed three orbits in just under 5 hours at an altitude of about 139 miles.

1983: In an address to the nation, President Ronald Reagan proposed developing technology through the new

Strategic Defense Initiative to intercept enemy missiles from space and nullify nuclear weapons.

1994: Luis Colosio, a presidential candidate for Mexico's ruling party who had vowed to fight political corruption, was fatally shot at a campaign rally in Tijuana.

2010: President Barack Obama signed into law the Affordable Care Act after Congress had adopted it. The Senate had voted along party lines, 60-39, in favor of the ACA, with Sen. Jim Bunning, R-Ky., not voting; the House had voted 219-212 to adopt it, with 34 Democrats crossing party lines to vote against it.

2011: Iconic Hollywood leading lady Elizabeth Taylor died at age 79. Taylor won the Academy Award for Best Actress for "Butterfield 8" and "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?"

2020: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson ordered the U.K. to go into lockdown for COVID-19. Johnson later faced allegations he misled Parliament and was dishonest to the public about government office parties that broke pandemic lockdown rules.

2024: Six construction workers on the Francis Scott Key Bridge died when it collapsed into the Patapsco River in Baltimore's Outer Harbor after being struck by a 984-foot container ship registered in Singapore named the Dali. Two of the eight workers, who were on the bridge when it fell, were rescued.

— *Charlie White, USA TODAY Network*

TODAY'S BIRTHDAYS

Actor-director **Mark Rydell** turns 97. Biomedical researcher **Dr. Robert Gallo**, 89. Mandolin player **David Grisman**, 81. Keyboardist-songwriter **Phil Lanzon** (Uriah Heep), 76. Businessman-diplomat **Rex Tillerson**, 74. Singer-songwriter **Chaka Khan**, 73. Actor **Amanda Plummer**, 69. Actor **Catherine Keener**, 67. Actor **Hope Davis**, 62. Actor **Richard Grieco**, 61. Actor **Marin Hinkle**, 60. Singer-songwriter **Damon Albarn** (Blur), 58. Actor-filmmaker **Randall Park**, 52. Actor **Michelle Monaghan**, 50. Actor **Keri Russell**, 50. Actor **Nicholle Tom**, 48. Singer-songwriter **Brett Eldredge**, 40. Chef-TV personality **Ayesha Curry**, 37. British royal **Princess Eugenie**, 36. Actor **Vanessa Morgan**, 34. Actor **Bridger Zadina**, 32. Actor **Victoria Pedretti**, 31.

— *USA TODAY Network*

Hundreds of Topeka city workers paid late

Stacey Saldanha-Olson

Topeka Capital-Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Potentially hundreds of Topeka city staff didn't receive their paycheck on time.

On March 20, city staff were notified of an issue with their paychecks and that they wouldn't be paid on time.

"Due to an approval error, staff did not receive paychecks this morning, however, city staff immediately worked to remedy this situation, and staff should receive pay by 1:30 PM, today," city communications director Daniel Garrett said in a written comment. "Depending on their banks, their accounts may not reflect the deposit until Monday. Staff was notified of this issue at 8:00 AM and updated at noon."

The 'unfortunate' error with Topeka staff's paychecks

The city's media team didn't respond to questions of how many staff members were impacted.

Mayor Spencer Duncan said he is in the process of finding out more about the incident. He said he was unsure of how many staff members were impacted but that he was under the impression it was many.

"My understanding as of now is that it was a technical error, and that all will be corrected today," Duncan said. "It's unfortunate and should not have happened, but thankfully there should be a quick resolution. And the next step is to ensure it doesn't happen again."

"I am very sorry this happened to our

employees."

Topeka City Councilwoman Christina Valdivia-Alcala raises concerns

Topeka City Councilwoman Christina Valdivia-Alcala was concerned about how this will affect staff members who live paycheck to paycheck.

"There are deep concerns that I have about people that perhaps may not have much of a buffer, not much of a savings, that struggle paycheck to paycheck," Valdivia-Alcala said. "If they had overdraft, say if a mortgage payment was automatically set up, how are those city employees going to be made whole?"

She said communications about the incident was not handled well.

"What we're looking at is inadequate communication, inadequate transparency, inadequate communication, specifically to city employees who continue to be at the crux of a number of concerns that I think you see being played out at city council meetings and beyond," Valdivia-Alcala said.

She encouraged staff members who face hardship due to the error to contact their supervisors to find a remedy.

"I would hope that any employees that are having issues and do not feel like they've been reimbursed for the city's failure to have this done in a timely fashion that they contact their supervisor through their chain of command," Valdivia-Alcala said. "And if they feel that they are getting no results, please contact us at the council office or they can contact me."

Marshall

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"On the warrant issue, there's a basic difference between an administrative warrant versus a judicial warrant," Marshall said. "Judicial warrant, the judge has to sign something, and that allows law enforcement to go into your house. But an administrative warrant does not allow you to invade someone's privacy."

In a separate appearance on Fox News Radio, Marshall said, "It's just not practical" to use judicial warrants.

"There's probably 20 million illegal aliens in the country right now," he said. "There's no way we could really go through this in a judicial way as opposed to administrative."

Where DHS shutdown negotiations stand

The impacts of the ongoing DHS shutdown, which has now lasted more than a month, have grown after Transportation Security Administration officers missed paychecks. Some airport security officers have resigned and others have called out, contributing to long TSA lines, and a TSA official has warned that airports could shut down if callout rates rise.

Marshall decried the disruption at airports, particularly during spring break traveling.

"I'm as frustrated as you are," Marshall said. "I would just ask my colleagues across the aisle, why are they wanting to put their politics ahead of American safety? I think that's what this issue is really about."

Marshall said the masking of ICE agents and use of administrative warrants are "what is separating us right now from getting a deal done with the Democrats."

He contended that "Democrats refuse to negotiate even on when it

comes to DHS funding." In the Senate, Marshall said, "The Democrat appropriators refused to sit down" with Republican senators.

"Ever since DHS was shut down, they refused to sit down and talk," Marshall said.

USA TODAY has reported that Senate Democrats and the White House have been in contact, but those negotiations have largely happened behind closed doors. Previously, House and Senate Democratic leaders released a list of 10 demands before the shutdown started. Additionally, Democrats have offered to fund TSA, FEMA and other DHS agencies minus ICE and Customs and Border Protection.

"They like the political discourse of not funding DHS," Marshall said of Democrats. "They like the political discourse of defunding the police. And in this case, they don't want our borders to be safe, they don't want Americans to be safe."

President Donald Trump's administration has reportedly proposed some concessions while holding firm on masks and administrative warrants.

One concession is expanding the use of body cameras. Marshall acknowledged Republican agreement to body cameras — though "we were planning on it anyway" — as well as "a host of other requests" from Democrats.

The Trump administration has indicated it would generally limit immigration enforcement at sensitive locations, including churches and schools. When asked about ICE at election locations, Marshall said he was unsure whether Trump's counteroffer covered polling places.

"My preference would be is that that's probably not the best place for ICE to do their work," he said. "There's other places they can do it."

Among other offerings from the White House is an agreement "adhere to existing law" and not deport American citizens.

Jason Alattid is a Statehouse reporter for The Topeka Capital-Journal. He can be reached by email at jala-tidd@usatodayco.com. Follow him on X @Jason_Alattid.

DAILY RECORD

Births

Stormont Vail

Kaylee and Dakota Soderlund, Topeka, boy, March 19
Autumn Robinson and Ronald Morgan III, Topeka, boy, March 18

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