

Becoming Wiser in 2021
Rohnert Park Chamber of Commerce
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Did you know that wisdom can be learned? In fact, a whole new [field of study of psychology](#) is growing about wisdom. And a great deal of wisdom will be needed in 2021.

It will be months before a majority of America's population receive a vaccine. And... there will be no easy solutions or quick remedies in 2021.

However dear reader, we *can* teach ourselves to be wiser!

So what is wisdom? it is a complex personality trait comprised of specific components:

- Empathy and compassion
- Control over emotions
- The ability to reflect on one's behavior
- Accepting diversity of perspectives
- Wise advising
- And spirituality.

And like everything else, wisdom starts in the brain; from the frontal lobes to the amygdala and the limbic system.

And *all of us* have the capacity to be wiser, and not simply as an artifact of accumulated years. Wisdom often comes with age. But as Oscar Wilde wryly noted, sometimes age comes along.

So here are five ways we can make ourselves wiser.

1. Choose to be positive. Optimism is a remarkable buffer to adversity. Remember that you can simultaneously grieve loss and experience sadness while having hope and optimism for the future.

2. Make your decisions based on the best evidence you have access to at that time, and then get on with it.

Indecision is effectively making a decision too. And if the decision proves wrong, proceed accordingly and don't dwell on the past. Realize that life can be **uncertain and unpredictable**. Grant yourself grace by acknowledging that you have done your best even when things don't work out.

3. Learn to forgive yourself. Learn from your mistakes; and forgive those mistakes. We are all fallible, and in that realization, we find compassion for ourselves and for others.

4. Focus your energies on the now. The consequences of the pandemic will be seen into 2021. Since the past past is already gone, and the future is not yet here, we only have the present on which we can truly focus.

If we take positive action, whether it is as simple as reaching out to a lonely co-worker or chronicling what we appreciate in a gratitude journal, we can make our own future better.

5. Connect with others who are struggling.

We can help each other through a simple phone call, decreasing the loneliness gripping the world. Listen to others and seek to understand them at their most complicated. Look for ways to be 'the helper,' as Mr. Rogers said. By helping others, we help ourselves find meaning, understanding, and growth.

2021 will be a year when we need wisdom more than ever.

We just need to find it and enhance it within ourselves. Our own personal wisdom can have cascading effects onto our loved ones, neighbors, and beyond, eventually influencing the most powerful institutions. This could be our new year's resolution.

So let's put behind the darkness of 2020, and make 2021 the Year of Becoming Wiser—both as individuals and as a society.

Wow!