

## English Conversation Club – Saratoga Library

January 30, 2025

A Motto to Live By

Do you know what a **motto** (**mah** toh) is? A **motto** is a short sentence, phrase or a saying that guides how someone leads their life. A company, school, organization or even a country can have a motto too. For instance, the motto of the European Union (EU) is "United in diversity". It was adopted in 2000.

The **motto** of California is the Greek word **Eureka** – which means "I have found it!" This word was chosen because gold was found in California in 1849.

The ancient Greek scientist Archimedes (c. 287-212 B.C.E.) was supposed to have exclaimed **Eureka** when trying to measure the specific gravity of gold. Eureka became the official California State Motto in 1963.



We will read how a **motto** might guide your life or give you inspiration. You might live by one of these mottos for the rest of the year, and maybe even the rest of your life. First, review the vocabulary.

**Vocabulary:** Review the following vocabulary words. Match the words to their meanings.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. <b>to distract</b> (dih-strakt)              | A. something that blocks one's way or stops or slows down progress  |
| 2. <b>to embolden</b> (em-bohl-dn)              | B. someone or something that gives one ideas for doing something; something that makes one want to do something |
| 3. <b>Eureka</b> (yoo-ree-kuh)                  | C. inspirational; providing hope, encouragement   |
| 4. <b>inspiration</b> (in-spuh-rey-shuhn)       | D. to take someone's attention away from what that person is doing or should be doing                           |
| 5. <b>obstacle</b> (ob-stuh-kuhl)               | E. to repeat the words of a statement often from memory   |
| 6. <b>recite</b> (ree-syht)                     | F. a word used to express success in discovering something; "I have found it!"                                  |
| 7. <b>resolution</b> (rez-uh-loo-shuhn)         | G. something that entices, or allures   |
| 8. <b>self-destructive</b> (self-di-struhk-tiv) | H. a decision or determination to accomplish something; a goal  |
| 9. <b>temptation</b> (temp-tay-shuhn)           | I. to encourage or make courageous; to make someone brave   |
| 10. <b>uplifting</b> (uhp-lif-ting)             | J. harmful to oneself   |

ANSWERS: 1–D; 2–I; 3–F; 4–B; 5–A; 6–E; 7–H; 8–J; 9–G; 10–C

### Dialogue One

**Cal:** My aunt is an excellent baker. Her **resolution** this year is to open a bakery by September.

**Kim:** I'm trying to start a business myself but have been **distracted** lately. There are so many **obstacles**.

**Cal:** Yes, but she keeps trying. At first, she couldn't find a building to rent, but one day she called and shouted, "**Eureka!** I found it." She found a great building at a low price. She's going to open "Sweet Delights Bakery" next month!

**Kim:** That's an **uplifting** story. Now I feel **emboldened** to start my own business too.

**Cal:** She's quite an **inspiration**. I'm **tempted** to start a business too!

**Kim:** I guess, "If at first, you don't succeed, try, try again."

## English Conversation Club – Saratoga Library

January 30, 2025

A Motto to Live By

### The Power of a Motto

Did you make any New Year's **resolutions** this year? Some people say they will exercise more, lose some weight, learn a new skill or become a better person. But often life, stress and work can get in the way. We are distracted by social media, problems that come up, **temptations**, and dealing with unexpected problems.

As a result, it can be easy to give up on our goals. If this happens to you, what can you do? Having a motto in mind may help. Some people believe the right motto can provide **inspiration** and purpose that helps them achieve their goals.

The motto links them to their deepest values and beliefs that they want to live their life by. Whenever they encounter difficulties or barriers, remembering their motto can **uplift** and **embolden** them to overcome an **obstacle**.

Here are some ways that a good motto may help you get through tough times and reach your goals. Discuss what you think these mottos mean.

1. A good motto can replace negative thoughts with healthy, helpful ones. For instance, if you frequently think you are not good enough to go for a better job or if you're afraid to take a chance to better your life, you can apply a motto such as:
  - If you are not willing to risk the unusual, you will have to settle for the ordinary.
  - What you choose to focus on becomes your reality.
  - If you can't stop thinking about it, don't stop working for it.
  - Life is a one-time offer, use it well.
  - Everything in life that matters requires risk.
2. A personal motto can remind you of the beliefs and character traits you want and value. Here are mottos of some of the most respected people in history:
  - Gandhi: "Be the change you wish to see in the world."
  - Einstein: "Strive not to be a success, but rather to be of value."
  - Aldous Huxley: "There is only one corner of the universe you can be certain of improving, and that's your own self."
  - American folk song: ""Keep your eyes on the prize."
3. A motto can calm your mind.

Life is tough and some days can be particularly stressful. We all can use a few methods to calm down so that we can think straight. Instead of **self-destructive** ways to cope with stress such as smoking, overeating or overdrinking, take a walk and **recite** a motto like one of these:

  - One day at a time.
  - Keep calm and carry on.
  - This too shall pass.
  - When life gives you lemons, make lemonade.
  - Don't sweat the small stuff
  - Will this matter a year from now?
  - Take a break, take a breath.

## English Conversation Club – Saratoga Library

January 30, 2025

### A Motto to Live By

4. Here are some mottos to live by. They capture how you might want to live your life. Reminders like these can help you get through a situation or help you do the right thing.

- Slow and steady wins the race.
- No pain, no gain.
- If at first, you don't succeed, try, try again.
- Live every day like it's your last.
- Be yourself. Everyone else is already taken.
- Eat healthy, sleep well, breathe deeply, enjoy life.
- Some of the best things in life are mistakes.

Of course, a life motto isn't everything because you still must work hard. The purpose of a life motto is to have a saying that you can **recite** over and over when you're going through tough times or are doubting yourself.

### Discussion Questions

1. Do you like any of the mottos listed above in particular? If so, which ones?
2. Do you think a personal motto can serve as a powerful force to help you achieve your goals or get you through tough times?
3. Do you have a personal motto or motto that you live by? If so, what is it?
4. Are there any mottos you would add to any of the lists above?
5. Group Exercise:
  - a. Adopt a motto for your group
  - b. Share ideas: For example, what are the values of your discussion group? What do you want to achieve with your group? How do you feel after a discussion?
  - c. Based on the ideas you've discussed, can your group come up with a short, memorable motto for your group. If there is time at the end of the session, we can share them with the other groups.

NOTE: You can adapt one of the mottos discussed today for your group. It doesn't need to be witty, just a good reminder of your values or goals. Here are pointers:

1. Keep it short and easy to remember.  
It can even be one word such as: Compassion. Calm. Listen.
2. Make it meaningful to everyone.
3. If you can, make it rhyme to make it easy to remember.

**Wishing you all a Happy Year of the Snake!**

### References

Weingus, Leigh. (13 July 2022). "35 Mottos to Live By"

[https://www.silkandsonder.com/blogs/news/30-mottos-to-live-by?srltid=AfmBOoqyFx2-LrF1V6ZNNU3ttxlG2Bmm9PRj1VQw9d\\_2HHqWbjjqES\\_G](https://www.silkandsonder.com/blogs/news/30-mottos-to-live-by?srltid=AfmBOoqyFx2-LrF1V6ZNNU3ttxlG2Bmm9PRj1VQw9d_2HHqWbjjqES_G)

Selig, Meg (August 21, 2015). "9 Reasons You Need a Personal Motto"

