

## Jason Wu

Barack Obama danced with his wife Michelle in the 2009 inauguration party. Michelle was wearing a single-shouldered white gown. She looked very elegant. People in front of TV were saying, “The dress is so beautiful.” At the same time, all the people in the fashion business were asking, “Who designed it?” To everybody’s surprise, the designer is a very young man, only 26 years old. Besides, he is Asian, and he is from Taiwan. His name is Jason Wu. He became famous overnight.

Beforehand, nobody told Jason that Michelle would wear that gown in the party. In fact, just like other people, Jason learned it from the TV. On that day, he was about to eat some pizza for dinner. He turned on the TV, saw the party, and noticed that gown. First, he was talking to himself, “That gown looked quite familiar.” Then, suddenly he figured it out, “Oh, I designed it!” He could not believe his eyes. He picked up the phone, and called his parents in Taiwan immediately. However, he could not talk; he cried. He cried because of happiness, pride and comfort. After a while, he told his mother on the phone, “Mom, nobody will laugh at us anymore.” Jason Wu would not be successful without his mother.

Jason Wu was different from other boys. Most boys like to play toy cars and airplanes but Jason enjoyed playing dolls when he was young. He also asked his mother to take him to see wedding dresses in the shops. He was very interested in fashion design. Many people around him thought he was weird. Only his mother knew very well that her boy had talents in design.

That is why Jason cried on the phone; he finally proved to the world that he is not weird at all but a very talented designer. He said in one interview to the audience in Taiwan, “Please encourage and respect your children when you find that they have special talents.”

## **Laughter is the best medicine.**

There is an old saying in English: “Laughter is the best medicine.” Until recently, few people took the saying very seriously. Now, however, doctors have begun to investigate laughter and the effects it has on the human body. They have found evidence that laughter really can improve people’s health.

Tests were carried out to study the effects of laughter on the body. People watched funny film, while doctors check their heart rate, blood pressure, breathing and muscles. It was found that laughter has similar effects to physical exercise. It increases blood pressure, the heart rate and the rate of breathing; it also works several groups of muscles in the face, the stomach, and even the feet. If laughter exercises the body, it must be beneficial.

Other tests have shown that laughter appears to be capable of reducing the effect of pain on the body. In one experiment doctors produced pain in groups of students who listened to different radio programs. The group which tolerated the pain for the longest time was the group which listened to a funny program. The reason why laughter can reduce pain seems to be that it helps to produce endorphins in the brain. These are natural chemicals which diminish both stress and pain.

There is also some evidence to suggest that laughter helps the body’s immune system, this is, the system which fights against infection. In an experiment, one group of students watched a funny video while another group served as the control group — in other words, a group with which to compare the first group. Doctors checked the blood of the students in both groups and found that the people in the group that watched the video had an increase in the activity of their white blood cells, that is, the cells which fight infection.

As a result of these discoveries, some doctors and psychiatrists in the United States now hold laughter clinics, in which they try to improve their patients’ condition by encouraging them to laugh. They have found that even if their patients do not really feel like laughing, making them smile is enough to produce beneficial effects similar to those caused by laughter.

## Overweight Dogs

It's no coincidence that overweight dogs have overweight owners.

You may have noticed that pets often share some physical characteristics with their owners, but have you ever noticed that they often mirror their owners' body shapes, too? It has been reported that over 45 percent of dogs in the US are overweight or obese. There are several reasons for this. First, owners of obese pets tend to humanize their animals and cannot resist feeding table food when their pets start to beg. Second, modern dog treats are loaded with fat, sugar, and salt, which create unhealthy cravings in pets, much like the case with snacks designed for humans.

Another reason, recently found by a Dutch study, is that overweight dogs often have overweight owners. This is not a coincidence because people tend to transfer their own habits to their pets. Humans who do not conscientiously follow a healthy diet or exercise are usually lax with their pets in the same areas. Overfeeding dogs and neglecting to take them out for their daily walks translate into weight gain, like they do for humans.

This is not a matter to be taken lightly because obesity in dogs can cause serious medical problems, premature death, and an overall diminished quality of life. To prevent this, owners need to identify obesity as a serious health problem as well as make having a balanced diet and getting regular exercise high priority for both parties. When this happens, the process benefits not only the pets but their owners as well.

--by Nadia Chung

## Ways to Keep Phone Calls Short

Do you like to talk on the phone? Do you think that you spend too much time on the phone?

The phone rings. It's a friend who wants to tell you about his or her health problem. You hate to be rude and cut your friend off, but what can you do? Time management consultant Stephanie Winston offers this advice:

1. Don't ask questions like "What's new?" They give the impression that you have time to chat. After "hello," get right to the heart of the matter.
2. Time your calls intelligently.  
If you make a call right before lunch or dinner, or at the end of the workday, people chat less.
3. Set a time limit. Start with, "Hi, I've only got a few minutes, but I wanted to talk to you about...." Or, "Gee, I'd love to talk more, but I only have a couple of minutes before I have to run errands."
4. Jump on a pause. Even the most talkative caller has to pause now and then. Quickly say, "It's has been great talking with you." Then end the conversation.
5. Forget niceties. Some people just don't take a hint. Interrupt your caller and say, "I'd like to talk to you longer, but I'm pressed for time. Good-bye." Then hang up. Don't ask for permission to end the conversation.
6. Find a "partner in crime." If nothing else works, ask someone in your home to help you. For example, one woman signals her husband, who yells, "Jane, I think the roast is burning!"
7. Avoid the phone completely. Use an answering machine to screen calls. If you have an important message for a chatterbox, leave the message when he or she isn't in.

(Source: *New Interchange 1b*, p. 97)

## A Lesson in Forgiveness

On a quiet Saturday afternoon, my friend and I were throwing stones onto the roof of an old lady's house. It didn't matter to me that I knew the old lady because I delivered the newspaper to her every day. The truth was we were bored, and throwing stones was something interesting to do--at least to boys like us.

I found a stone and sent it for a ride. However, it slipped out of my hand when I threw it. It hit a small window of the lady's house and broke the glass. The crash was very loud. We were afraid of being caught, so we took off without delay.

For the next few days, I was so worried about getting into trouble that I didn't think of the old lady and her broken window. However, when I was sure that I wasn't in trouble, I started to feel sorry about what I had done. Besides, I still had to deliver the newspaper to the old lady. Every day, she smiled at me when I gave her the paper, but I was no longer comfortable in her presence.

I made up my mind to save the money I made from delivering newspapers, and I calculated that seven dollars would cover the cost of repairing her window. In three weeks, I had the seven dollars ready. I put the money in an envelope and wrote a note. It said that I was sorry for breaking her window and that I hoped the seven dollars would cover the cost of repairing it.

When it was dark, I walked quietly to the old lady's house and slipped the envelope under her door. I felt relieved and couldn't wait to look straight into her eyes once again. The next day, I handed the old lady her paper, happily returning the warm smile that I received from her. She thanked me for the paper and said, "Here, I have something for you." It was a bag of cookies. I thanked her and left.

I walked away, enjoying the cookies. They tasted great. After I ate several, I discovered an envelope inside the bag and pulled it out. When I opened it up, I was very surprised. In the envelope, there were the seven dollars and a short note that said, "I'm proud of you!"

(Adapted from "True Forgiveness" by Jerry Harpt.)

## THE 90/10 SECRET

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Did you have a good day yesterday, or was it another day when something went wrong? If you have one bad day after another, you need to learn the 90/10 secret.

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### A BAD START

At breakfast a few weeks ago, Jack's daughter, Emily, spilled a glass of milk on Jack's pants. Jack got upset. He yelled at his daughter, and she started to cry.

"Why did you yell at her?" said his wife. "Why did you put the glass on the edge of the table?" replied Jack angrily, as he went upstairs to get changed.

Because she was upset, his daughter didn't get ready for school in time, and she missed her bus. Jack had to take Emily to school. Because he was in a hurry, he forgot his computer. He was 40 minutes late for work--and as soon as he got there, he had to go home to get his computer. It was a bad start to the day, and it didn't get any better.

A few days later, Jack read an article about the 90/10 secret. The secret is: Ten percent of life is what happens to you. You can't control it. The traffic's bad, you lose something, somebody spills coffee on you. That's life. Things happen, and you have to deal with them.

Ninety percent of life, however, is how you react. Jack's bad day started because he reacted badly. Remember that the next time that something bad happens to you!

Since Jack learned about the 90/10 secret, his attitude has changed.

### DID IT HAVE TO BE A BAD START?

The next time Jack's daughter spilled her milk on Jack at breakfast, this is what happened: Jack smiled and said, "It's OK. Accidents happen. Don't worry." He went upstairs and got changed. When he came down, Emily said, "Bye, daddy," kissed him, and ran out to get on her bus. Jack didn't have to take her to school. He picked up his computer, kissed his wife, and they both left for work. He got to work early, and he had a great day.

(Source: Network 3, p. 11)

## Oprah Winfrey

On a day in 2013, one black lady went into a shop in Zurich, Switzerland. She saw a very beautiful bag on the shelf and asked the salesclerk, “May I take a look at that bag?” To her surprise, the salesclerk said, “No! It is too expensive for you.” The bag costs about \$35,000 (about NT\$1,000,000). After the black lady went back to her country, the United States, she mentioned this shopping experience on her TV talk show. Afterwards, both the shop keeper and the Tourist Office of Zurich said “Sorry!” to her. This lady is Oprah Winfrey. So, does she have enough money to buy that bag? Of course! She earns about \$77 million a year.

Oprah Winfrey had an unhappy childhood. Her mother was unmarried and poor. Oprah was sent to her grandmother’s place. Something terrible happened. Oprah was sexually abused by her cousin and her uncle when she was only nine years old. After years of suffering, she ran away from home to live with her mother again. Sadly, She was pregnant at the age of fourteen but her son died right after birth. From then on, Oprah began to steal money from her mother and lied to her. Her mother sent Oprah to her father’s place. He encouraged Oprah to go back to school and Oprah became an excellent student. In fact, education changed her life.

Oprah’s career started when she was 19 years old. She got a job at the radio station. Then she worked for the local evening news. Years later, she has become a television talk show hostess and producer. Her most famous show is The Oprah Winfrey Show. She has written five books with other authors. Besides, she has published two magazines. She also has a book club. After she becomes rich, she helps a lot of poor people. In 2007, Oprah invested \$40 million and established a girls’ high school in South Africa. Oprah Winfrey is called “the world’s most powerful woman.”

(Source: *Time Magazine*.)