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to help you Live Well

How To Be Awful



Over time, words that were once positive can acquire a negative meaning – very different from their original intent. One of these words is “awful.” Centuries ago, the word awful meant “awe-inspiring,” “worthy of respect,” and profoundly respectful or reverential.

BYU President Kevin Worthen, gave this encouragement to the graduating students in his commencement address earlier this spring: “My admonition is that you be awful in its original, unpejorated sense, that you always be aware of things that are awe-inspiring. I am urging you to be full of awe, if you will.”

In that sense, when you are being awful, you are in the moment. When I look at my sweet daffodils blooming, I am not thinking about anything else for that brief moment, except their delicate colors, shapes, and smells. It gives me a moment of peace, of pleasure – pure awe.

Awe inspires creativity. Who hasn’t wanted to capture an awe-inspiring scene with a photograph, painting, or poem in order to share with others the experience that comes with awe?

Peace comes from awe. Filling our lives with great music, art, poetry, literature, nature, or playing children is a wonderful replacement for those things that evoke anxiety, contention, and fear.

When we were children, we were truly awful. We were captivated by bugs, clouds, new sounds, and funny faces! Can you rediscover your adult awe today? I challenge you to become truly awful. Try it. You’ll like it.

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Intermountain Employee Assistance Program e-tips are messages that teach, remind, and inspire in our journey to live well.

