

THIS I BELIEVE

THE PERSONAL PHILOSOPHIES OF
REMARKABLE MEN AND WOMEN



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IN ASSOCIATION WITH   

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Beliefs are choices. No one has authority over your personal beliefs. Your beliefs are in jeopardy only when you don't know what they are.

Understanding your own beliefs, and those of others, comes through focused thought and discussion. Most public dialogue is now propelled by media outlets owned by a dwindling number of multinational corporations. A healthy democracy needs ways to bypass gatekeepers so we can communicate with one another directly, and perhaps even find common ground. *This I Believe* is an exercise in philosophical self-examination in a public context. It rises from the grass roots, where people can begin to listen to each other, one at a time.

My own *This I Believe* essay begins, "I believe in listening . . ." This is no surprise, coming from one who works in radio, and public radio at that. At the station in my hometown, it's our motto, and the first word ever spoken on the air when we signed on. *Listen*. If there is a testament to a belief in listening, it will be found in these essays.

Take a moment, then, to consider the beliefs that guide the lives of others, beliefs that may confirm your own, or challenge them, or even open your mind to something new.

When you are done, think about this: What would *you* say?

A Shared Moment of Trust

Warren Christopher - Los Angeles, California

One night recently, I was driving down a two-lane highway at about 60 miles an hour. A car approached from the opposite direction at about the same speed. As we passed each other, I caught the other driver's eye for only a second.

I wondered whether he might be thinking, as I was, how dependent we were on each other at that moment. I was relying on him not to fall asleep, not to be distracted by a cell phone conversation, not to cross over into my lane and bring my life suddenly to an end. And though we had never spoken a word to one another, he relied upon me in just the same way.

Multiplied a million times over, I believe that is the way the world works. At some level, we all depend upon one another. Sometimes that dependence requires us simply to refrain from doing something like crossing over the double yellow line. And sometimes it requires us to act cooperatively, with allies or even with strangers.

Back in 1980, I was negotiating for the release of the 52 Americans held hostage in Iran. The Iranians refused to meet with me face to face, insisting instead that we send messages back and forth through the government of Algeria. Although I had never before worked with the Algerian foreign minister, I had to rely on him to receive and transmit, with absolute accuracy, both the words and nuances of my messages. With his indispensable help, all 52 Americans came home safely.

As technology shrinks our world, the need increases for cooperative action among nations. In 2003, doctors in five nations were quickly mobilized to identify the SARS virus, an action that saved thousands of lives. The threat of international terrorism has shown itself to be a similar problem—one requiring coordinated action by police and intelligence forces across the world. We must recognize that our fates are not ours alone to control.

In my own life, I've put great stock in personal responsibility. But, as the years have passed, I've also come to believe that there are moments when one must rely upon the good faith and judgment of others. So, while each of us faces—at one time or another—the prospect of driving alone down a dark road, what we must learn with experience is that the approaching light may not be a threat, but a shared moment of trust.

Warren Christopher was U.S. Secretary of State from 1993 to 1997. As President Carter's Deputy Secretary of State, he helped normalize relations with China, win ratification of the Panama Canal treaties, and gain release of the American hostages in Iran. He died in 2011.



Former Secretary of State Warren Christopher negotiated international treaties and the release of hostages. He believed diplomacy—and life—work best when people trust and depend on one another.

Be Cool to the Pizza Dude

Sarah Adams - Port Orchard, Washington

If I have one operating philosophy about life it is this: "Be cool to the pizza delivery dude; it's good luck."
Four principles guide the pizza dude philosophy.

Principle 1: Coolness to the pizza delivery dude is a practice in humility and forgiveness. I let him cut me off in traffic, let him safely hit the exit ramp from the left lane, let him forget to use his blinker without extending any of my digits out the window or towards my horn because there should be one moment in my harried life when a car may encroach or cut off or pass and I let it go. Sometimes when I have become so certain of my ownership of my lane, daring anyone to challenge me, the pizza dude speeds by me in his rusted Chevette. His pizza light atop his car glowing like a beacon reminds me to check myself as I flow through the world. After all, the dude is delivering pizza to young and old, families and singletons, gays and straights, blacks, whites and browns, rich and poor, vegetarians and meat lovers alike. As he journeys, I give safe passage, practice restraint, show courtesy, and contain my anger.

Principle 2: Coolness to the pizza delivery dude is a practice in empathy. Let's face it: We've all taken jobs just to have a job because some money is better than none. I've held an assortment of these jobs and was grateful for the paycheck that meant I didn't have to share my Cheerios with my cats. In the big pizza wheel of life, sometimes you're the hot bubbly cheese and sometimes you're the burnt crust. It's good to remember the fickle spinning of that wheel.

Principle 3: Coolness to the pizza delivery dude is a practice in honor and it reminds me to honor honest work. Let me tell you something about these dudes: They never took over a company and, as CEO, artificially inflated the value of the stock and cashed out their own shares, bringing the company to the brink of bankruptcy, resulting in 20,000 people losing their jobs while the CEO builds a home the size of a luxury hotel. Rather, the dudes sleep the sleep of the just.

Principle 4: Coolness to the pizza delivery dude is a practice in equality. My measurement as a human being, my worth, is the pride I take in performing my job — any job — and the respect with which I treat others. I am the equal of the world not because of the car I drive, the size of the TV I own, the weight I can bench press, or the calculus equations I can solve. I am the equal to all I meet because of the kindness in my heart. And it all starts here — with the pizza delivery dude.

Tip him well, friends and brethren, for that which you bestow freely and willingly will bring you all the happy luck that a grateful universe knows how to return.

Sarah Adams has held a number of jobs in her life, including telemarketer, factory worker, hotel clerk, and flower shop cashier, but she has never delivered pizzas. Born in Connecticut and raised in Wisconsin, Adams now lives in Washington where she is an English professor at Olympic College.

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We know them. We depend on them. We call them out on cold, rainy nights. Now, college professor Sarah Adams tells us why her life philosophy is built around being cool to the pizza delivery dude.