

Chicken Soup for the Coffee Lover's Soul: Celebrating the Perfect Blend (Chicken Soup for the Soul)

By Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, Theresa Peluso

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This delectable collection of stories is full of interesting facts and anecdotes about coffee's history and culture, how a bean goes from field to cup, and the many varieties available.

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- Sales Rank: #2185504 in Books
- Published on: 2012-10-02
- Released on: 2012-10-02
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.50" h x .70" w x 5.50" l, .45 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 400 pages

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Jack Canfield is co-creator of the Chicken Soup for the Soul® series, which includes forty *New York Times* bestsellers, and coauthor of *The Success Principles: How to Get from Where You Are to Where You Want to Be*. He is a leader in the field of personal transformation and peak performance and is currently CEO of the Canfield Training Group and Founder and Chairman of the Board of The Foundation for Self-Esteem. An internationally renowned corporate trainer and keynote speaker, he lives in Santa Barbara, California.

Mark Victor Hansen is a co-founder of Chicken Soup for the Soul.

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1

Delectable Delights

Common Grounds

Life is too short for bad coffee.
Author Unknown

It had been a delightful family reunion at our lake cabin in Longville, Minnesota. My parents had come from their home on Maui to spend the summer reconnecting with four generations. It was a week of boating and campfires and laughter that my mother watched and enjoyed from her wheelchair.

Her great-grandchildren seemed to understand that she was fragile, and they would always slow down whenever they tumbled and jumbled too close to her. They knew that her arms were weakened and she couldn't hold them, so they would lean gently into her lap and press their heads against her chest. They felt her love in her laughter and smiles of approval. At night, after she would be helped into bed, all twenty-two of us would line up at her door for a one-at-a-time goodnight kiss. The last one was always my five-year-old granddaughter, Joy. She would flash her sweet, shy smile and then hug her great-grandmother.

One rainy day, with the men forced in from fishing and the children content to watch a movie instead of tubing and swimming, the women decided to go into town together for a ladies' coffee outing. We preened and dressed and campaigned for my mother to go with us. 'No, no,' she said with her limited speech ability. But we kept insisting, explaining how easy it would be to get her wheelchair into the coffee shop, that we wouldn't stay longer than she would be comfortable, and that it wouldn't be as fun and definitely not complete without her. We all cheered when she finally nodded yes.

My sister helped her get ready, and my daughters wheeled her to the van. For a few more minutes, the cabin screen door creaked and thudded as last-second 'I'll-be-right-backs' were shouted, and forgotten items from lipsticks to diapers were retrieved, followed by the shuffling of car seats and the slamming of car doors until everyone was finally settled. Joy stood quietly by, enjoying all the happy busyness.

'Come on, Joy, jump in my car. You come with Grandma!' I tickled her into a hug, looking forward to being alone with her and her chatter. She climbed into the back seat, buckled in and sat, curly-haired and summer-tanned, with her pink, big-girl purse set primly on her lap.

'Grandma,' she said, 'I like going to coffee with the ladies.'

'Well, you are a young lady now,' I assured her.

'When I go to town, I usually go for ice cream,' she said as she clicked open her purse and rifled inside until she found her little coin bag. She shook it to take measure of the pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters she had earned. She was too young to notice that her ice-cream purchases were always supplemented by Grandpa and Grandma, or her aunts and uncles, or Dad's and Mom's dollars.

'How much will my coffee cost?' she asked, concerned. 'I did have a lot of monies, but now I only have some monies.'

'Sweetie pie, it's my treat. You can have any fruit icee you like. I want to celebrate being with you.' She smiled as she dropped her coin bag into her purse. I knew she was both glad to hear the words of love, and happy that she could save her money for another ice-cream trip to town.

'Great-Grandma was really sick once, wasn't she?' Joy asked.

'Yes, Joy. We are very blessed that she is still with us.'

'When you were my age, could she used to walk?'

'She sure could. She walked me to school and carried me up the stairs to bed. She ran alongside my bike when my dad took off the training wheels. I remember the kitchen on cold winter mornings, with my mother cooking at the stove and the smell of coffee mixing with the warmth of breakfast. I remember the first time I realized that my mother was beautiful. She walked down the front stoop of our house and sat down to watch us play. She was wearing a pretty flowered sweater and soft coral lipstick, her coffee cup nestled in her hands.'

Time wavered for me. I saw myself and my granddaughter's reflections in the rearview mirror, and yet, for those few moments, I had been a child again. I teared up for the tenderness of it.

'That's why you are so happy to bring Great-Grandma to coffee, right Grandma?' Joy said.

'You're right, sweetie. Coffee will always make me think of my mother. I guess I want to take every chance I can get to show her that I love her.'

'You want to celebuate her,' Joy smiled.

We all entered the Common Grounds coffee shop with a whirl of activity. My mother beamed and clapped when we rolled her wheelchair up the ramp, and the deep whiff of coffee greeted us as we opened the door. We found a large table in the home-style comfort and then went to the counter to choose our coffee flavors and desserts, pay for our orders, and relax with our oversized cups of coffee.

It was while I was waiting for Joy's drink that I noticed her little hand reaching up to the counter. Too short to see the top, she stretched, carefully placing each of her coins, side by side, all eighty-seven cents of it.

'Joy, honey, you can put your money back in your purse and save it for ice cream.' I stroked her curly hair. 'I am celebrating you, remember?'

'I know, Grandma, but I want to buy Great-Grandma's coffee,' she said quietly, with all the wisdom of the young and the shared knowledge of the generations. 'I want to celebuate her, too.'

Cynthia Hamond

Kicking the Habit

Decaffeinated coffee is the devil's blend.

Author Unknown

I haven't wanted to talk to anyone about this, but last week my husband came downstairs for breakfast and caught me yelling at the toaster. Much to his credit, he didn't take sides. Instead, he just patted my shoulder and said, 'Honey, I think you need to cut down on your caffeine.'

'What do you mean?' I said. 'I can handle my coffee. It's not my fault the toaster your mother gave us for Christmas has a temperamental attitude. I pushed down the handle, and it's just sitting there, refusing to heat up. And for your information, buddy, I have better things to do than hang around here all morning waiting for it to feel like making toast. So I ask you, then, what am I supposed to do? What? What? WHAT?' I grabbed him by the lapels.

'Now, maybe it's me,' he continued, 'but lately, you seem a little, well, edgy.'

Believe me, I am as shocked as you are. Like nearly everyone else on the planet, I have about one, maybe two cups of coffee a day—especially if you don't count the cup or two of pre-coffee that I drink in the morning until I can get to my real cup at the coffee bar down the street. And I've always considered my after-dinner cups of instant as more of a nightcap. So I did what any devoted wife would do: I called my friend Barb for a second opinion.

'Say, have I been a little, you know, testy lately?' I asked. There was silence for a moment.

'Well,' she said finally, 'the other day you did yell at the cart corral at the grocery store for taking up a good parking space.'

Okay, so maybe, just maybe, my husband was right. But I've been on this Earth long enough to know I can function just fine without coffee. I'm not some kind of weak addict who is dependent upon a stimulant to get through my day. No-sir-ee. So the next day, just to show him what I was made of, I stopped drinking coffee cold turkey. Now, I know what you're thinking. Doing anything 'cold turkey' is a very, very bad idea. And you're right. After all, there's a reason they call it that, and I suspect it's because turkeys, as far as animals go, aren't a very smart bunch. But I wasn't thinking about all this back then. I only knew that it was just as easy to drink decaffeinated herbal tea for breakfast as coffee. Why, after only one cup, I could feel all of the caffeine rushing out of my body and being replaced with healthy, disease-fighting antioxidants.

Now, all of this healthiness and good nutrition would've been great, but there was one particular drawback: by mid-morning, my eyeballs felt as if they were hanging somewhere down around my knees and were being kicked every time I took a step.

'Stop yelling, for gosh sakes!' I snapped at my five-year-old son.

'I didn't say anything, Mom. That was the cat.'

But what did I expect? Any fool knows that you can't just go around cutting out prominent substances from your diet without going through some signs of withdrawal. That's probably why, when I called my friend Julie to tell her about my new caffeine-free way of life, all that came out was 'jummgfhuppm.'

After that, I drank another cup of tea to try to wake myself up. And another. 'Mommy, you don't look so good,' my son said as I finished off my seventh cup. In the afternoon, I had a hunch, although I could be wrong, that there was a little man inside my head pounding on an anvil. So I tried reading the newspaper to get my mind off the pain, but I couldn't concentrate on a sentence long enough to make it to the end. Somewhere in the middle, I would start staring into space and think about things like high-speed Internet access or the wondrous miracle of life or where, exactly, do all of the lids to Tupperware go.

Then it occurred to me that perhaps smelling coffee wouldn't hurt. I mean, just one or two little sniffs. But, as I opened the lid on the can, something else occurred to me: if I drank a cup of coffee, I'd still be irritable, overly sensitive, and listless. In fact, I'd feel the VERY SAME way I'm feeling now. But my headache would be gone and, with a little luck, I'd get my mental edge back. So I made a cup. Just a little one. But don't worry, if my husband finds out, I'll tell him that the toaster drove me to it.

Debbie Farmer

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