

A LESSON FROM GIRAFFES

Bringing a giraffe into the world is a tall order. A baby giraffe falls 10 feet from its mother's womb and usually lands on its back. Within seconds, it rolls over and tucks its legs under its body. From this position, it considers the world for the first time and shakes off the last vestiges of the birthing fluid from its eyes and ears. Then, the mother giraffe rudely introduces its offspring to the reality of life.

The following is how a newborn giraffe learns its first lesson. The mother giraffe lowers her head long enough to take a quick look. Then, she positions herself directly over her calf. She waits for about a minute and then she does the most unreasonable thing. She swings a long, pendulous leg outward and kicks her baby, sending it sprawling head over heels.

When it doesn't get up, the violent process is repeated over and over again. The struggle to rise is momentous. As the baby calf grows tired, the mother kicks it again to stimulate its efforts. Finally, the calf stands for the first time on its wobbly legs.

Then, the mother giraffe does the most remarkable thing. She kicks it off its feet again. Why? She wants it to remember how it got up. In the wild, baby giraffes must be able to get up as quickly as possible to stay with the herd, where there is safety. Lions, hyenas, leopards and wild hunting dogs all enjoy young giraffes, and they would get it too, if the mother didn't teach her calf to get up quickly and get with it.

The late Irving Stone, an American writer known for his biographical novels of famous historical personalities, understood this. He spent a lifetime studying greatness, writing novelised biographies of such men as Michelangelo, Vincent van Gogh, Sigmund Freud and Charles Darwin.

Stone was once asked if he had found a thread that runs through the lives of all these exceptional people. He said, "I write about people who sometime in their life have a vision or dream of something that should be accomplished and they go to work."

"They are beaten over the head, knocked down, vilified, and for years they get nowhere. But every time they are knocked down, they stand up. You cannot destroy these people. And at the end of their lives, they have accomplished some modest part of what they set out to do." **TCX**



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