

Creating Good Fortunes



Chinese restaurants send us on our way with fortunes folded into hard cookies. For years, Donald Lau, a vice-president with Wonton Foods, wrote many of the fortunes for his company's cookies, using any resource he could find for inspiration. One of his last fortunes – before he ran out of ideas entirely – was taken from a subway sign:

“Beware of odors from unfamiliar sources.”

Meg Barnhouse (author of *Did I Say That Out Loud? Musings from a Questioning Soul*; to order, [click here](#)) may have gotten one of Mr. Lau's last efforts when she opened a cookie with the “utterly lame” proverb, “Where there's a will, there's a way.” If she owned a fortune cookie company, she said, she would write fortunes that “excited the imagination, shone a light on new possibilities, and shifted perspectives.”

For example, she might write, “You will see three beautiful things tomorrow.” The person receiving that fortune would look for beauty all through the next day, perhaps in places she never looked before. Perhaps she would find *more* than three things beautiful and then would begin to contemplate which were the *most* beautiful things she saw. Wouldn't *that* balance out the horrors of the evening news?

Or she might write: “Seven people love you madly.” Think of the fun of imagining who those people might be! Could it be someone you least expect?

Or she might give someone's worries a little respite: “You will figure something out two days from now.”

Or she might give someone permission to take an intermission: “Don't try to improve yourself tomorrow,” or “The next two years are just for fun.”

Putting that idea into action, now when guests come to dinner at her home, she offers them (literally) a good fortune in a bowl (minus the cookie) as a happy parting gift. You can do the same. On the following page are many blank rectangles for you to fill with your own goodwill toward others.

- Cut them apart and fold them in half and ask others to draw one out without looking.
- Or take a fancier approach: Roll the rectangles into scrolls and tie them with tiny ribbons (or rubber bands) or put each fortune into a jewelry-size box, wrap them with fancy paper, and let people choose a surprise package.

Need help getting started? See the sample fortunes and quotes on the following pages.

Potential good fortunes:

- You will see three beautiful things tomorrow.
- Seven people love you madly, and some would surprise you to know.
- Don't worry. You will figure something out two days from now.
- Don't try to improve yourself tomorrow. Enjoy the "you" you are now.
- For the next two weeks focus on finding fun in each day.
- You will surprise yourself by laughing out loud twice tomorrow.
- Something nice you say offhandedly to someone is going to make her day.
- Remember the saying, "A little bird told me"? Watch for a little bird and try to figure out what it's telling you. (What would you *like* it to tell you?)
- The next time you go to a familiar place, you will notice something amusing you never saw before. From now on you will never miss it.
- You will smile at a grumpy person today and it will throw him off-balance and secretly please you.
- You are admired by someone you least expect it from. Can you figure out who and why?
- You are good at imagining your faults; now praise yourself for at least five strengths others see in you. Do it daily.
- The rest of today (or all of tomorrow?) is about comfort. Indulge yourself and accept the comfort offered by others.
- Something someone tells you – without meaning to be funny – will tickle your funny bone today. Pass it on; share your amusement with someone else.
- Quincy Jones said, "I've always thought a big laugh is a really loud noise from the soul saying, 'Ain't that the truth'." You will find a truth you can laugh at today.
- Tomorrow you will realize how grateful you are for someone in your life. Tell him or her, and you will both feel uplifted.
- You will find great pleasure today in some small thing – sunshine? A cup of tea? A warm blanket? Bask.

- You have an appreciation for music and the fine arts that others admire in you.
- Life will soon throw you a welcome curve that will make you smile.
- Happy news is coming your way. Watch for the positives.
- People find your mischievousness intriguing.
- Your creative ideas are admired. Keep your imagination flowing.
- Something you thought was lost will soon turn up.
- An experience you dreaded will turn out surprisingly well!
- Look for 3 things that make you smile, then share them.
- You've been feeling beleaguered, but focusing on someone who embodies the best in humanity will give you hope.
- Do something slightly outrageous today and more so tomorrow. Surprise yourself with your sauciness.
- You've been meaning to praise someone who impressed you. Do it.
- Wear a flower (or funny pin) on your lapel or top today. Smile at all those who smile at you because of it. Perhaps it's the beginning of a new friendship.
- Play or sing a favorite song from your past today and wallow in the warm memories it conjures.
- Give yourself a present today. What tangible or intangible thing would please you? Would it please someone else, too?
- Someone spoke well of you behind your back recently. Imagine what good things were said and by whom.
- Your generosity will come back to you in an unexpected way.
- Stressed? Take a nature walk and breathe in fresh air. If you can't get out, watch a nature program and imagine yourself inside the screen.
- Google "Funny animals," browse a while, and give yourself a needed laugh. Then double your fun by sharing what you find.

Alternative fortunes that are just fun or funny

Lead me not into temptation; I can find the way myself. - Rita Mae Brown

The only time a woman really succeeds in changing a man is when he is a baby. – Natalie Wood

The trouble with relationships...people change and forget to tell each other.
– Lillian Hellman

I didn't realize until quite late in life that women were supposed to be the inferior sex. – Katharine Hepburn

When women go wrong, men go right after them. – Mae West

The perfect lover is one who turns into a pizza at 4 a.m. – Charles Pierce

Love may be blind, but it certainly finds its way around the dark. – Unknown

A terrible thing happened again last night – nothing. – Phyllis Diller

Enjoy yourself. If you can't enjoy yourself, enjoy somebody else.
- Jack Schaefer

I was nauseous and tingly all over. I was either in love or had smallpox.
– Woody Allen

You know you have found happiness when you stop looking for it.
– Unknown

In three words I can sum up everything I know about life: it goes on.
– Robert Frost

I believe in getting into hot water; it keeps you clean. - G.K. Chesterton

An apology is a good way to have the last word. – Unknown

I hate to spread rumors, but what else can you do with them? – Amanda Lear

Whoever said money can't buy happiness didn't know where to shop.
– Unknown

Instant gratification is not soon enough. – Meryl Streep

I have enough money to last me the rest of my life, unless I buy something.
– Jackie Mason

The only thing that has to be finished by next Tuesday is next Monday.
– Jennifer Unlimited

Nothing is so simple that it can't be screwed up. – Unknown

Reality is the leading cause of stress amongst those in touch with it.
– Jane Wagner

Normal is in the eye of the beholder. – Whoopi Goldberg

The greatest pleasure in life is doing what people say you cannot do.
– Walter Bagehot

If you can't be a good example, then you'll just have to be a horrible warning. – Catherine Aird

The most welcome person is the one who knows when to go. – Unknown

If a man smiles all the time he's probably selling something that doesn't work. – George Carlin

Brightness is more important than cleanliness, because brightness is about heart, and cleanliness is only about soap.
-- Tony Ross

I've begun to think of myself as "independently wealthy" because I realize that I carry within myself most of what I need to make me happy.
-- Catherine Roundtree

Joy seems to me a step beyond happiness. Happiness is a sort of atmosphere you can live in sometimes when you're lucky. Joy is a light that fills you with hope and faith and love.
-- Adele Rogers St. Johns

You cannot hold back a good laugh any more than you can turn the tide. Both are forces of nature.
-- William Rotsler

You will do foolish things, but do them with enthusiasm.
-- Colette