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Recently, I came across a story I found to be so touching and delightful, I wanted to share it with you.

In 1957, a boy named Howard dreamed of becoming an artist. Anxious for some tips on how to be one, he sent a letter to *his* favorite artist, a man named Theodore Geisel. You may have never heard of Geisel before, but rest assured, you've probably seen his artwork. You just know him under a different name:

Dr. Seuss.

To Howard's surprise, Dr. Seuss actually responded. But it wasn't a canned response; the kind of boilerplate material sent by an agent or publishing company on the author's behalf. It was from Seuss himself, and it contained some very valuable advice:

Dear Howard:

About giving you advice...pointers on how to properly write and illustrate a picture book...all I can say is this:

This is a field in which no one can give you pointers **but yourself**.

The big successes in this field all succeeded because they wrote and they wrote and they drew and they drew. They studied what they'd drawn...each time asking themselves one question: **How can I do it better, next time?**

The thing to do, and I am sure you will do it, is to keep up your enthusiasm! Every job is a lot of fun, no matter how much work it takes. If you plug away and do exactly what you are doing, making it better and better every month and every year...you CAN be successful.

Your friend,

Dr. Seuss<sup>1</sup>

The master and the novice exchanged another pair of letters two years later, but after that, nearly three decades passed. If he thought of Howard at all during that time, Seuss likely assumed the young boy had grown up and become something else, since many of us choose different careers than the ones we first envisioned as children.

But, on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1985, Seuss received a *new* letter – along with a Xerox copy of an old one. It was from Howard.

Dear Mr. Geisel/Dr. Seuss,

If you peer at the two Xerox copies attached to this letter, you'll recognize them as your gracious responses to a thirteen/fifteen-year-old Alabama boy who wrote to you in 1957 and 1959. I confided that I hoped to grow up and write and illustrate children's books myself. As you can see, you gave me a valuable gift: You took me seriously.

It's been twenty-five years since the second of your two letters to me was written. During that time, I've often thought that I should write and thank you for the encouraging words which you offered me.

I have not illustrated any children's books yet, but I have grown-up to be a cartoonist and humorous illustrator. My principal interest is in comic strips for adults, and I fill out my extra time doing spot drawings for magazines. My first book will be published at the end of 1985.

Although I couldn't claim to enjoy a hundredth of your own stature as an artist, I occasionally receive letters from youngsters not unlike the letters I wrote to you. And remembering the strength of the childhood dreams which are represented by such letters, I try very hard to do as you did and treat the young artist as a person with dignity. Thanks for showing me, in your work all through the years as well as the particular letters you wrote to me, both how to be a wonderful artist and how to be a kind and supportive human being.

Yours sincerely,  
Howard Cruse<sup>1</sup>

In response, Dr. Seuss penned one final letter to Howard:

Dear Howard.....

It sure made me feel GOOD, reading your letter and seeing what you've been accomplishing during the past 25 years! It makes me especially happy to have played a small part in it. May your first book sell a billion copies! And may your next 25 years be even better than the 25 you've just conquered!

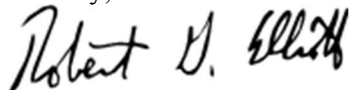
All the best,  
Dr. Seuss<sup>1</sup>

There's a particular line in Howard's last letter that stands out to me: *You took me seriously*. Sometimes, that's the best gift we can give someone, isn't it? When we reveal our most cherished hope or most secret fear, what we often need most as human beings is simply to be taken seriously. When I think of my own life, and my own career, I realize how critical that gift has been for me. I wouldn't be where I am today without the mentors and loved ones who took me seriously. In fact, as a financial advisor, I think one of the most important things that *I* do for my clients is learn about what they want to accomplish most...and take them seriously.

I hope you enjoyed reading these three letters as much as I did. May we all have someone in our lives to take us seriously when we need it. And remember, as Dr. Seuss said:

Today you are you! That is truer than true! There is no one alive who is you-er than you!

Sincerely,



Robert G. Elliott, CFP  
Vice President



Sarah L. Elliott

<sup>1</sup> "You gave me a valuable gift," *Letters of Note*, <https://lettersofnote.com/2009/12/04/you-gave-me-a-valuable-gift-you-took-me-seriously/>