SOFTWARE & TECH

Whatever You Are Be A Good One

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Introduction: The Timeless Wisdom of “Whatever You Be, Be a Good One”

In a world that often celebrates the loudest, the fastest, and the richest, a quiet quotation from Abraham Lincoln cuts through the noise with enduring clarity: “Whatever you are, be a good one.” These seven simple words hold a depth that transcends centuries, professions, and personal circumstances. The phrase is not just a motivational poster on a classroom wall; it is a profound call to excellence, integrity, and intentional living. Whether you are a student, a parent, an artist, a cashier, or a CEO, the underlying principle remains the same: your identity does not matter as much as the quality you bring to it.

This article explores the meaning behind this powerful statement, how it applies to modern life, and why embracing it can lead to greater fulfillment, respect, and personal growth. We will unpack the origins of the quote, examine its relevance across different domains, and offer practical steps to embody its wisdom every day. By the end, you will see why “whatever you be be a good one” is not just advice—it is a philosophy for a life well-lived.

The Origins and True Meaning of the Quote

Abraham Lincoln, the 16th President of the United States, uttered this line in a speech to the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society in 1859. While the context involved hard work and diligence in farming, the message quickly transcended agriculture. Lincoln believed that every honest occupation had dignity, and that a person’s character was shown not by their title but by how they performed their duties.

The phrase “whatever you be be a good one” emphasizes **character over status**. It suggests that society’s hierarchy of jobs is an illusion; what matters is the commitment you bring to your role. Whether you sweep floors or run a country, the standard of “good” is the same: honesty, effort, persistence, and care. This idea resonates with the ancient Greek concept of *arete*—excellence in all things—and with modern ideas of craftsmanship and self-respect.

Why This Wisdom Matters More Than Ever

Today, we are bombarded with messages that tell us to “be more,” “hustle harder,” and “climb the ladder.” Often, this leads to burnout, comparison, and a sense of inadequacy. Lincoln’s quote offers an antidote: stop measuring yourself against others and focus on being the best version of whatever you are right now. It is a call for **personal excellence** in the present moment, not a race to an arbitrary top.

Additionally, in an age of distraction and mediocrity, the simple act of being good at what you do stands out. Quality always attracts attention. By embracing this mindset, you not only improve your own life but also contribute positively to the lives of those around you.

Applying “Whatever You Be Be a Good One” to Your Career

Our professional lives occupy a huge portion of our waking hours. Yet many people feel stuck in jobs they consider beneath them. The Lincoln quote reframes that narrative. Instead of waiting for the perfect role, you can choose to be exceptional in your current one. This doesn’t mean staying in a dead-end job forever; it means bringing pride and dedication to every task, regardless of its prestige.

Excellence in Any Role

Consider a barista who remembers customers' names and makes each latte with artful precision. Or a janitor who cleans a school so thoroughly that children feel respected. These individuals embody "whatever you be be a good one." They transform an ordinary job into a craft. The result? They earn appreciation, build self-esteem, and often open doors to new opportunities because people notice their work ethic.

On the other hand, a person who coasts through their job with minimal effort not only produces poor results but also damages their own reputation and morale. Excellence is a habit, and when you practice it in one area, it tends to spread to others.

Overcoming Job Dissatisfaction

If you hate your current job, the quote does not tell you to suffer in silence. Instead, it challenges you to ask: *What does "good" look like here?*Maybe being a good employee means completing tasks efficiently so you have energy to pursue a side passion. Or perhaps it means using your position to help others, creating purpose in a mundane environment. Sometimes, the act of being good transforms the job itself—because you reshape your attitude and relationships.

Personal Development and Character Building

The phrase is not only about external performance; it is deeply tied to internal growth. Being "a good one" requires **self-awareness, discipline, and continuous improvement**. These are the building blocks of character.

Integrity as the Foundation

To be good at anything, you must first be honest with yourself. This means acknowledging your strengths and weaknesses. Integrity—doing the right thing even when no one is watching—is the core. A good doctor cannot cut corners; a good friend cannot lie; a good parent cannot neglect. The quality of your being derives from your ethical choices.

The Role of Continuous Learning

No one is born excellent. Mastery requires learning. If you want to be a good writer, you must read and practice. If you want to be a good listener, you must silence your own inner chatter. "Whatever you be be a good one" implies a growth mindset: you are not fixed; you can become better. This is liberating because it means you are in control of your improvement.

Relationships and Community: Being Good to Others

The wisdom extends beyond the individual. Being "a good one" in relationships involves empathy, reliability, and generosity. Think of a neighbor who always offers help, or a partner who listens without judgment. These people are not perfect, but they are good at being human with others.

Family and Friendship

In families, being a good parent, sibling, or child means showing up consistently. It means apologizing when wrong, celebrating others' successes, and providing support during hardship. The quote reminds us that our roles in relationships are just as important as our professional ones. If you are a friend, be a good one—don't just be present in name.

Citizenship and Community Involvement

On a larger scale, being a good citizen means participating in democracy, caring for the environment, and helping

strangers. Even small acts—like picking up litter or voting—reflect the principle. **Goodness compounds**. When enough people strive to be good in their roles, communities flourish.

Overcoming Common Barriers to Being Good

Of course, applying this philosophy is not always easy. Several obstacles stand in the way.

Fear of Failure and Perfectionism

Many people avoid trying to be good because they fear falling short. But “good” does not mean perfect. It means giving your best with the resources you have today. A good attempt that fails is still honorable. Lincoln himself faced countless defeats before his presidency. The key is to define “good” realistically, then improve step by step.

External Judgment and Comparisons

Social media amplifies the tendency to compare. You might feel that being a good parent is impossible when you see curated images of perfection. The antidote is to return to your own lane. Focus on your own definition of good, based on your values, not on others’ highlights. The quote is a personal commitment, not a competition.

Lack of Motivation or Energy

Sometimes we just feel tired. Being good requires effort. But here, the principle helps because it breaks down greatness into manageable pieces. You don’t have to be the best in the world; you just have to be good at whatever you are *right now*. That can mean taking a small step: one kind word, one careful task. Small goodness builds momentum.

Practical Steps to Live the Quote Daily

How can you integrate “whatever you be be a good one” into your routine? Here are actionable ideas:

- Define your roles: List the hats you wear (employee, partner, citizen, hobbyist). For each, write one specific behavior that would make you “good.” For example: “As a colleague, I will respond to emails within 24 hours.”
- Embrace craftsmanship: Treat every task as an art. Even folding laundry or writing an email can be done with care. The quality of the small things reflects the quality of your character.
- Seek feedback: Ask a trusted person: “How can I be a better [role]?” Their answer might reveal blind spots. Improvement requires humility.
- Celebrate effort, not just outcome: Pat yourself on the back for trying hard, even if the result wasn’t perfect. This reinforces the habit of aiming for goodness.
- Limit multitasking: When you do one thing at a time, your quality improves. Be fully present in whatever you are doing—that is being good.

Profound Examples from History and Today

Many great figures have embodied this quote. **Mother Teresa** said, “We can do no great things, only small things with great love.” That is the same spirit. She was “good” at being a servant to the poor. **Steve Jobs** was famously obsessive about making products “insanely great”—he was good at being a design visionary. Even everyday heroes like a teacher who stays late to help a struggling student or a bus driver who greets every passenger with a smile—these people live the wisdom.

In literature, the quote is reminiscent of Robert Frost’s line: “But I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep.” Being good is a promise we make to ourselves and the world. It is a journey without a final destination, but one well worth traveling.

Conclusion: The Legacy of Being Good

Abraham Lincoln left us with a deceptively simple directive: “Whatever you be be a good one.” In a time of division, haste, and superficial metrics, this message returns us to what truly matters—quality of character, integrity of effort, and respect for every honest role. Excellence is not reserved for the few; it is available to anyone willing to commit fully to their present circumstances.

As you move through your day, remember that **the world needs more good people—not necessarily famous or rich, but deeply good at what they do**. Whether you are a parent, a artist, a mechanic, or a student, the call is the same. Embrace it. Be the best version of whatever you are today. That is how you build a life of meaning, and how you leave a positive mark on everyone you touch. After all, as the saying reminds us, it is not what you are that counts, but how good you are at being it.

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