

**Practice Makes Progress** © 2006 David Roth

*inspired by a hang gliding trip I took in 1994 along with my invitation to a Peak Parent Conference ([www.peakparent.org](http://www.peakparent.org)) in Breckenridge, CO twelve years later*

I was nervous, I was scared  
He said jump, and I said where  
Off this cliff, we're gonna glide  
"You must be joking", I replied

Not at all, he said to me  
I'll be right here, here's where I'll be  
We'll take the plunge, it won't be hard  
We'll do it once, and that's a start

Practice makes progress, give it a try  
That thing you think you can't do just stresses you  
It's just a journey, you and I  
Practice makes progress, give it a try

Got a friend in a chair  
Rolls around here and there  
There are things that he can't do  
Ride a bike, tie his shoe

But who said legs or eyes or ears  
Makes this world any clearer  
He teaches me, I stumble on  
And we get up whenever we fall down

Practice makes progress, give it a try  
That thing you think you can't do just stresses you  
It's just a journey, you and I

Practice makes progress, give it a try

Here it comes again, I'm feeling fearful  
Afraid of the mistakes that I might make  
But fear is just excitement without oxygen  
So I'll take the deepest breath that I can take...

A little nervous, a little shy  
New situation, my oh my  
But here I go, what's there to lose  
I'll still be breathing no matter what I do

Practice makes progress, give it a try  
That thing you think you can't do just stresses you  
It's just a journey, you and I  
Practice makes progress, give it a try

It's just a journey, it's always so  
Practice makes progress  
Here we go

**No Apologies** © 2007 David Roth

I'm sorry, I don't care if Paris went to jail  
If the truth be told, that's not what I call news  
What a wealthy woman does to get attention  
Isn't worth the cost of ink the papers use

And I'm sorry Anna Nicole had such a troubled life  
I wish some respite for her family and her friends  
But there are other stories fallen by the wayside  
That these distractions somehow manage to transcend

There is a war, there is deception  
I will not be misdirected by denial  
I will give my attention  
To the people hanging on for their survival

And I'm sorry American Idol is more popular  
Than the history channel, books, or PBS  
Some kind of commentary on our modern culture  
When so many care what Simon would express

With Angelina and her boyfriend country-hopping  
Grabbing kids from every corner of the globe  
While I respect the altruism of their actions  
I don't need too see the footage or the photos

There is a war, deception  
I will not be misdirected by denial  
I will give my attention  
To the people hanging on for their survival

The people hanging on for their survival

**Lipstick on the Mirror** © 2004 David Roth

*based on a true story as presented by Dr Joyce Saltman at the  
National Reading Styles Institute, San Antonio, TX*

There was a problem in the girl's room at the elementary school  
Just above the seven sinks along the wall  
That's the spot that held the mirror with a permanent reflection  
Of a half a dozen toilets in six stalls

First day of the autumn term last period was over  
All the little girls went on their way  
The janitor was making rounds, like he always did  
But a brand new mess to clean up on that day

There was lipstick on the mirror  
There was lipstick on the mirror  
There was lipstick on the mirror  
27 sets of scarlet smooches

The janitor, his name was Bob, spent 30 extra minutes  
Cuz he couldn't leave his job in such a mess  
But there they were the next day, all those crimson colored kisses  
And for Bob another half hour after class

There was lipstick on the mirror  
There was lipstick on the mirror  
There was lipstick on the mirror  
27 sets of scarlet smooches

A week went by and every day the same routine would happen  
Bob cleaned 'em off at nighttime, they were back again by lunch  
Til he finally left the principal a note about the lip-prints  
That Bob no longer wanted to expunge (who could blame him?)

But bureaucracy was moving slow, that's kinda how they do  
And the situation dragged along and festered  
With memos to the teachers and occasional announcements  
Still conditions hadn't changed the whole semester

There was lipstick on the mirror  
There was lipstick on the mirror  
There was lipstick on the mirror

27 sets of scarlet smooches

So the principal got desperate and she ordered an assembly  
She'd devised a way to help the students see  
The burden of this extra work would come in clearer focus  
Friday in the girl's bathroom at 3

"Young ladies, you know Bob, and he's the one who we can thank  
For keeping all our windows clean and clearer  
I just wanted you to see firsthand all the extra work he does  
Every time you put your lips there on the mirror

Then Bob pulled out a squeegee with a handle six feet long  
And he held it high for all the girls to see  
Then he dipped it in the toilet and he splashed it on those lip-prints  
You could hear a seat drop in that lavatory

No more lipstick on the mirror  
No more lipstick on the mirror  
No more lipstick on the mirror  
Not one solitary set of scarlet smooches

No more lipstick on the mirror  
No more lipstick on the mirror  
No more lipstick on the mirror

And a model of accelerated learning

**Satyagraha** © 2006 David Roth

*"Satyagraha" is the Sanskrit word for "truth"; agraha from the Sanskrit prefix a and the root grah, means "to grasp or hold". The two words compounded may be rendered as "grasping/holding the truth"*

*and also represent the philosophy and practice of nonviolent resistance developed by Gandhi as related in this piece ~ with additional thanks to Steven Feig for bringing this bit of history to my attention*

One hundred years ago, halfway 'round the world  
A fertile seed took hold in a barren field  
A lawyer thrown from a train, ticket in his hand  
Spent the night in the station, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa

Satyagraha, satyagraha  
Satyagraha, clinging to the truth  
Satyagraha, satyagraha  
Satyagraha, clinging to the truth

Struggling with his rage, shaping his transformation  
Alchemizing shame into dignity  
Tuesday night they came, three thousand men and women  
Invited by the one taken from the train, it was time for change

Satyagraha, satyagraha  
Satyagraha, clinging to the truth  
Satyagraha, satyagraha  
Satyagraha, clinging to the truth

The man was Mohandas Ghandi, the year was 1906  
The date was September 11th, there was a problem he needed to fix

And that was the night civil disobedience  
Came into the light of our consciousness  
One hundred years ago, now one hundred years beyond  
One hundred and eighty degrees, we must turn around

Return to peace

Satyagraha, satyagraha  
Satyagraha, clinging to the truth  
Satyagraha, satyagraha  
Satyagraha, clinging to the truth

**Community of Faith** © 2007 David Roth

*friends Barbara Shiller and daughter Trina went down to New Orleans to help people out down there in 2007 and came home with this among many amazing stories.*

There's a little piece of paper and it's taped onto a bucket  
Which is sitting on the counter of a gas station near Pearlinton  
Pearlinton is halfway from Biloxi to New Orleans  
And there isn't much that's left of it since Hurricane Katrina

There's some money in the bucket, , there are coins and there are  
crumpled bills  
That look like many faces of the people there in Pearlinton  
Crumpled but not torn apart weathered and exhausted as they  
Pick up all the pieces of their lives so quickly washed away

Community of faith, community of faith  
Community of faith, community of faith

Someone put the bucket on the counter of the gas station  
Right by the books of matches in early May two thousand seven  
Not too many passersby these days out there in Pearlinton  
But every day a little bit more money in the bucket there

Community of faith, community of faith

Community of faith, community of faith

Good and decent people, flooded on a dime  
Rise above the waters a quarter at a time

there's a little piece of paper and it's taped onto a bucket  
but the money in the bucket's not for anyone in Pearlington  
they heard of a tornado up in Kansas, a thousand miles away  
so they dig a little deeper sending money up to strangers there

Community of faith, community of faith  
Community of faith, community of faith

**Rocket Science** © 2007 David Roth

*an autumn 2007 invitation from Gail Williams to speak/sing at NASA's  
Goddard Space Center in Greenbelt, MD launched this song,  
premiered there that morning*

It's fifty years since Sputnik, when the Russians shocked the world  
With an orb and two antennae Earth would never be the same  
Fueling our worst fears that we'd be vulnerable and weak  
If we did not respond in kind, we'd lose the game

So we got our act together, and Explorer One went flying  
But not before the Russians sent a dog up into space  
If I said I knew why they thought dogs should fly, I would be lying  
They were caught up in some kind of human race

A race to the furthest star  
A race to the galaxies above  
If a little bit of fear can go so far  
Imagine what a world could do with love

Gagarin took a spin around the globe in 61 and  
He was followed ten months later by an astronaut named Glenn  
Alexei took a spacewalk, Captain Kirk, he took our TV  
And I've never been the same since then

A race to the furthest star  
A race to the galaxies above  
If a little bit of dreaming goes so far  
Imagine what a world could do with love

Imagine human footprints on a distant lunar plane  
Imagine floating science labs where gravity is gone  
Imagine the potential that our species could contain  
If we were drawn...to love again

I heard a scientist declare the world as we know it  
Is destined to be swallowed up in some gigantic hole  
And nothing that you do on earth will outlast or survive this  
Is there any point in trying to take control?

Just another baby boomer, writing poems  
Putting flowers into rifles, hugging trees and singing songs  
And the questions in the air aren't rocket science:  
What's the point and where on Earth do we belong?

In our race to the furthest star  
A race to the galaxies above  
If a little bit of vision goes so so far  
Imagine what a world could do with love

My darling is as lovely as a cupcake  
She tells the truth and doesn't hold a grudge  
If I should wander off the path of mental health and wellness  
She's there to hold the course so I don't budge

There may be times we lack communication  
I'll own my part, I know the role I play  
If she might feel that I may have some issues  
That's where I draw the line, and when I say

I ain't got issues, I got subscriptions  
No single story, but whole collections  
My shelves are bursting with new editions  
I ain't got issues, I got subscriptions

Our schedules are somewhat convoluted  
The crack of dawn is when I go to sleep  
That's round about the time she's gettin' jumpy  
She's makin' coffee while I'm countin' sheep

She oughta know, it's not new information  
She's Yoga Journal, I'm a Rolling Stone  
We try to meet up somewhere in the middle  
It's Entertainment Weekly in our home

We ain't got issues, we got subscriptions  
One big cacophony of contradictions  
Our shelves are bursting with new editions  
We ain't got issues, we got subscriptions

She's a hazelnut biscotti, I'm a kreplach\*  
It's fair to say we go at different speeds

She says that I was nothin' til I met her  
But if you ask me, she will tell you she's the only one I need

I took the Myers-Briggs personality profile  
I'm something that they call INFP  
That first initial stands for introverted  
And you-know-who's initials start with "E"

We ain't got issues, we got subscriptions  
One big plethora of predispositions  
Our shelves are bursting with new prescriptions  
We ain't got issues, we got subscriptions

\*Yiddish for small pockets of noodle dough filled with ground meat  
or cheese, usually boiled and served in soup

### **Things That Do Not Serve Me** © 2006 David Roth

I'd be lying if I said I wasn't nervous  
When the doctor said I'd need to have it out  
He said that it was common, not to worry  
But that's easier said than done, without a doubt

So I nodded while I sat there in denial  
And I pondered all the outcomes as he spoke  
I could batten down the hatches of resistance  
Or I could use this opportunity to grow

from) Things that do not serve me, things that I don't need  
Things that I am done with and no longer choose to feed  
And when I'm on the other side I'll know that that letting go  
Of all those things I didn't need will help me getting whole

There were failures and frustrations that I swallowed  
Disappointments and distresses that I held  
But the thought of letting all that anger surface  
Didn't seem like it was worth the way it felt

Now it feels like something deep inside my psyche  
Has erupted and imploded in my throat  
The construction crew is setting up the pylons  
Where the pavement's finally cracking from the load

Of things that do not serve me, things that I don't need  
Things that I am done with and no longer choose to feed  
And when I'm on the other side I'll know that that letting go  
Of all those things I didn't need will help me getting whole

Did I make the perfect choices, did I do the best I could  
Does holding in contribute to my very highest good?  
I release the mighty octopus that smothers and defends  
I embrace the golden foamy sea that purifies and cleanses

So they took that little object from my body  
They removed the thing that raised up all the flags  
But they also got a whole lot more than tissue  
Because I packed it full of other things I had

Things that do not serve me, things that I don't need  
Things that I am done with and no longer choose to feed  
And when I'm on the other side I'll know that that letting go  
Of all those things I didn't need will help me getting whole

You remind me that I'm always forgiven  
You remind me that I'm always loved  
When I try too hard and feel so empty  
You remind me that I'm good enough

When that devil Doubt is racing before me  
Sprinkling eggshells of distrust and disarray  
You are rolling out your carpet of forgiveness  
And you give me solid ground to find my way

You remind me that I'm always forgiven  
You remind me that I'm good enough  
When I try too hard and feel so empty  
You remind me that I'm always loved

I know that there are times I've been distracted  
And I know that there are things I didn't do  
But the Universe is perfect and I know it  
And the reason that I'm sure of it is you

Did I forget to leave a flower on your pillow  
Did I forget to say how much you mean to me  
This is my bouquet of recognition  
For every gift and grace you've helped me be

You remind me that I'm always forgiven  
You remind me that I'm good enough  
When I try too hard and feel so empty  
You remind me that I'm always loved

You remind me

My Work Day © 2003 David Roth, Jana Stanfield, Sue Kroupa

I sit around, I stare in space  
I take a break, a torrid pace  
Get back to work, I rub my eyes  
A workaholic in disguise

Discipline's my middle name  
Time to take a nap again  
Maybe one more cup of tea  
"All My Children" 's on TV

I'm thinking, I'm thinking  
I'm thinking, I'm thinking  
I'm thinking what I might want to say  
Welcome to my work day

Back to work, my daily grind  
Tripping through a cluttered mind  
Pet the cat, clean the fridge  
How to write that perfect bridge

I'm thinking, I'm thinking  
I'm thinking, I'm thinking  
I'm thinking what I might want to say  
Welcome to my work day

Time to use a different chord  
Better not go overboard  
Keep it simple, tight and terse  
Find my way back to the verse

There's the phone, not now, I'm blazing  
Brand new trails of navel-gazing  
Hemingway was so inspiring  
Long time thinking, short time writing

I'm thinking, I'm thinking  
I'm thinking, I'm thinking  
I'm thinking what I might want to say  
Welcome to my work day

### **Valentine in Panama** © 2006 David Roth

My baby and me went to Panama for Valentine's Day  
It'd been a rough year and we decided it was time to get away  
Sandals, flip-flops, carry-ons, we were moving at the speed of light  
A hammock and a virgin margarita would be just about right

We landed and we hooked up with a cabbie named Javier  
He didn't speak English but my baby got some savoir-faire  
Cuz she mucho bueno hablas espanol and you've never seen a  
prettier sight  
Than a five foot three Italian Irish Cape Cod girl speaking Spanish in  
Panama City  
To our nueve best amigo taxi driver on a Saturday night

No cell phones, no laptops, one bed  
Hotel Parador, forty-four dollars  
And a Jimmy Buffet book that my Mom just read

We took a puddle jumper to an island called Bocas del Toro  
But by now a lotta gringos have bought it all up from all the locals  
The very best meal we had was from a lady at a chicken stand

She was grilling and frying and minding her very own business

Internet cafe, that sucking screen

Here we go, just a peek and the next thing you know

We're right back up to maximum speed

It seems there was some kind of shooting back in the States

Dick Cheney went huntin' and his aim was not terribly great

It kinda makes you wonder 'bout the kind of things'll happen

When the you-know-what hits the fan

When you find out that the finger on the trigger of the rifle

Pointed anywhere he wants to in the whole entire world

Is the very same finger that he pulled when he hit his own man

One more night, let's really hit the town

It's Valentine's Day and I must say

I remember you in your wedding gown

John Prine he won a grammy, and oh boy, it's about time

A voice of reason in a world that has gone awry

But we're flying back home where you can say what you want

Cuz it's the good old U.S. of A.

And that's what me and my baby did

That's what me and my baby did

That's what me and my baby did, on Valentine's Day

**Ahmed al-Khatib** © 2005 David Roth

*Thanks again to friend Dr. Beryl Levinger who brought this true story to my awareness (as she did years ago with a story that another song "Flag of Hope" is based on)*

Ahmed had a plastic gun, a toy, that's all it was  
He got it from his uncle one December, just because  
The older boys were rebels, and he liked to play along  
And one day he'd grow up to be as big and brave and strong

Israeli soldiers often searched the Jenin camps and towns  
They were looking for insurgents, they were always cracking down  
The residents resented these intrusions on their homes  
The rebels fired rifles, the younger boys threw stones

One Thursday came another clash between the warring groups  
Again, the bullets, stones and rocks, the rebels and the troops  
A soldier saw a gunman, and he fired at a boy  
The victim was a 12-year old, the weapon was a toy

Ahmed al-Khatib was taken off to Ramallah  
But his wounds were such that he was transferred out to Israel  
A hospital in Haifa where the Jewish doctors did  
Every single thing they could to help this child live

Despite their greatest efforts, Ahmed passed away  
A family's worst nightmare turned reality that day  
That's when they had every reason to exact revenge  
To carry on the history of this hatred between men

They could have shouted out in anger, outrage, grief and pain  
They could have caused a riot against the Jews who'd killed their son  
What did they do to face this darkest hour of their lives?  
They donated his organs so that others might survive

A liver for a baby, two kidneys for a child  
One lung each a girl and boy, ages four and five  
A woman in her fifties got the organ that she'd need

And a 12-year old received the heart of Ahmed al-Khatib

Some were Palestinian and some of them were Jews

The family's intention was that no one be refused

The neighbors asked the father about this decision he had reached

"The heart that can forgive will bring us closer to peace"

A powerful reminder of those who might forget

The humanity of those who live on the other side of the fence

Somewhere in this world today, six people live and breathe

The legacy of those who cherished Ahmed al-Khatib

**Special Penny** © 2005 David Roth

You might think a single penny

Isn't worth too much these days

That it has so little value

You could throw a few away

If you passed one on the sidewalk

Would it even slow you down

Well I learned about small treasures

When I saw one on the ground

I found a Special Penny

Right there for me to see

Gleaming and bright and shining

Somehow it called to me

So I put it in my pocket

And it came where I would go

Everyone who touched this Penny

Would quickly start to grow

They would stand up straight and stronger

They would think and laugh and cry

They would instantly be richer

They would look you in the eye

I found a Special Penny

Right there for me to see

Gleaming and bright and shining

Somehow it called to me

But the inside of my pocket

Was too tiny and dark and too tight

And one day my special Penny

Had lost a little light

So I took it from my pocket

And I placed it 'neath a tree

Cuz I knew this special penny

Was not only just for me...

And that's where I hope you find it

Though this world may break you down

That's why a Special Penny

Is a treasure to be found

I found a Special Penny

Right there for me to see

Gleaming and bright and shining

Somehow it called to me

**The Ranch of All Compassion** © 2005 David Roth

*written one August afternoon at the Woody Guthrie Center in Great Barrington, MA, and sung there that night, reading the lyrics off my laptop at the piano*

In the Berkshire Eagle I read today of a town named Crawford, Texas  
There's a big long road leading to a ranch limousines go back and forth there

There's tiny crowd gathered by the road, and it's gaining in it's numbers

They are holding hands, they are holding signs, they are joined by many others

There's a mother mourning her proud young son and she stands with friends and neighbors

Who are wondering why all these guns appear in the hands of sons and daughters

Is there anything in this whole wide world that is worth surrendering lives for

I will ask myself, have i done all i can to surrender my agenda

I will raise my voice just because I can

That's the beauty of my homeland

And I'll sing til all of the cows come home

To the ranch of all compassion

I'll sing til all of the cows come home

To the ranch of all compassion

There's a broken spoke in the mighty wheel, there's a boulder in the boot

When you walk wherever you might choose be careful of your footprints

To all parents of all brave lost souls there is nothing I can say  
But I can raise my voice, we can shine a light til this darkness goes  
away

I will raise my voice just because I can  
That's the beauty of my homeland  
And I'll sing til all of the cows come home  
To the ranch of all compassion

I'll sing til all of the cows come home  
To the ranch of all compassion

### **We Belong Together**

*by David Roth and the 3rd Grade Classes of Hartshorn Elementary,  
Short Hills, NJ*

*Hartshorn teacher Amy Blake go the local school district to invite  
composers to co-create songs about community with each of the  
grades at her school. We were so inspired by our song that I knew I  
wanted to include it on this project as well as send a copy to the  
President. Missions accomplished!*

We belong together  
We'll be friends forever  
Will we fight, no never!  
We belong together

We belong together  
We'll be friends forever  
We may not live in the same town  
But we all live in the same world

But the world has some problems

War, hunger, pollution  
Bad guys, hatred, disasters  
We have to find a way

We belong together  
We'll be friends forever  
Will we fight, no never!  
We belong together

We have different traditions  
We have different religions  
We have different opinions  
We have different names

We belong together  
We'll be friends forever  
Will we fight, no never!  
We belong together

We'll make sandwiches for hungry people  
We'll pick up our garbage and recycle  
We'll send cards to people who need them  
We'll make friends instead of war

We belong together  
We'll be friends forever  
Will we fight, no never!  
We belong together

So I wont be mean, I'll be kind  
I'll leave all the bad stuff behind  
I'll be trustworthy and open up my heart  
And that's where the changes will start

We belong together  
We'll be friends forever  
Will we fight, no never!  
We belong together

**Time for Bed** © 2005 David Roth

*written in a Cosy Sheridan songwriting class at Common Ground on the Hill (Westminster, MD) . One day she simply told us to write a lullaby.*

Time for bed, your favorite hour  
The day is done, the lights go lower  
Addie's curled up by your side  
Chihuahua dreams of endless rawhide

You love your bed and so do I  
I'll tuck you in and soon I'll lie  
Right next to you, so off you go  
It's charming how you love it so

My second wind is blowing through  
I'm staying up, but I'll climb down the  
Stairs to you in a little while  
Did you know that when you sleep

You smile and when I come to bed  
I'll turn the lamp off by your head  
You left it on so I could see  
That's something nice you do for me

I like those eye shades that you wear

I like it where your skin is bare  
I even like that little snore  
Did you brush your teeth? Well, I don't care

It's time for bed, the midnight hour  
The day is done, the lights go lower  
Addie sleeps, the daylight hides  
And soon I'll curl up by your side...