

CHARACTER



Choices

and

Consequences

September 2006

With every choice there is always a consequence!

“ . . . We shape our lives and we shape ourselves. . . And the choices we make are ultimately our responsibility.” ~Eleanor Roosevelt

Choices. Consequences: They never sleep.

From the time we are born, we make choices and enjoy the consequences of those choices. We often associate the word “consequences” with something bad, but it also represents something good happening in our lives. The “good” is a result of a choice or choices that are building blocks or enablers of positive positioning and positive results in the experiences of life.

A man I knew well was not known as a leader in the community, in business or even in his neighborhood. Rather, he was an activist who quietly and often anonymously improved the lives of others. His choices were usually simple but they were always consistent. He actively looked for a way to improve the life or outlook of others and rarely failed to immediately act on an opportunity. Frequently, his actions consisted of only a few kind words that addressed an area in the personality of his contact that was shunned or ignored by others. On some occasions, he gave all the money he had to those in need. He even gave his vehicle to a widow who was struggling to feed her three small children. Over the years, many new people came into his circle of “friends”. They were from all levels of the social strata. Some were wealthy, some were movie stars and others lived in shacks hidden away along the river or in an orchard. However, most of them were just ordinary people who only needed the polishing of a few kind words or acts to help them reveal their nobility.

The term “Pay It Forward” was first introduced into his vocabulary in 1962 when his vehicle stalled in the center lane of a bridge in a major city during the evening rush hour. Cars honked, people said things out of their windows and others shook their fists in frustration of being impeded by a stalled vehicle, but one young man stopped to help. After years of quietly helping other people, my friend received some interest on his way of life. The vehicle was easy to fix. It only had vapor lock in the carburetor. The young mechanic poured water over the hot fuel system and the vehicle started easily. My friend tried to pay the young man for his welcome help, only to receive the words, “Pay It Forward” to someone else in need”.

Like ripples from a rock thrown into a peaceful lake, the good deeds of a lifetime had reflected off the far shore and had come back to help in a time of need. It was time to send them out again and continue to “Pay It Forward”.

During the viewing at his funeral, his family was astounded to be greeted by hundreds of people from all over the western United States who had come to pay their respect. The family didn’t know any of them but the visitors all had stories to tell about how they were helped by the deceased husband and father. Many of the visitors had only met him one time, but the interaction had established a life-long feeling of friendship. They came from all walks of life. There were mayors, truck drivers, waitresses, a man on parole, a bank president, an attorney, and hundreds of other occupations. Their stories were as varied as the personalities telling them and all were unknown by the family. One ‘friend’ was a police officer whose life had been saved, another had driven 16 hours non-stop from northern California to make it in time. He explained that he received a hot meal when he was at the ‘bottom’ from a fellow who quietly walked over and sat by him. He said that he was now a successful husband and father and that his life had turned around after talking to the man at the counter in the bowling alley. Retrieving his wallet, he showed the worn, tiny slip of paper on which he’d written the name of his benefactor. He said that he often looked at it when life threatened to harden him.

The stories were new. The impact of repeatedly choosing to perform small positive acts resulted in consequences never imagined. The ripples were almost waves.

Choices. Consequences. They never sleep.

It has been said that the gate of history turns on small hinges, and so do people’s lives. The choices we make determine our destiny. – Thomas S. Monson

“I shall be telling this with a sigh
somewhere ages and ages hence;
two roads diverged in a wood, and I,
I took the one less traveled by,
and that has made all the difference.”

-- Robert Frost, poet

Lee Drew
Lindon Resident

“Your attitude can take you forward or your attitude can take you down. The choice is always yours!”

–Catherine Pulsifer

“When you have to make a choice and don’t make it, that is in itself a choice.”

–William James

“We are free up to the point of choice, then the choice controls the chooser.”

–Mary Crowley

“If you don’t change your direction you may end up where you are headed.”

Book List

Pinocchio (*many versions*)

Good Job Oliver

by *Laurel Molk*

Summer My Father Was Ten

by *Pat/Brisson/Andrea Shine*

The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks

by *Katherine Paterson*



Family Activities

****Benjamin S. Carson, M.D.** is a pediatric neurosurgeon who was born on September 18, 1951. In fifth grade, he was considered the bottom of his class. Through determination, hard work, and encouragement he moved to the top of his class and on to a higher education. Benjamin continued to choose to succeed. In 1987, he successfully separated the Binder Siamese twins. He said, "You do have the possibility of controlling your own destiny if you are willing to put in the appropriate amount of time and effort."

****As a family, take a penny choice walk.** At each corner take turns deciding which way to go on "heads" or "tails." *Compare the walk to choices made in life.*

****Read a book,** such as Pinocchio, together as a family, and talk about the choices made and the consequences that followed.

****As a family, make a list of questions** to ask when faced with a choice.

Kid's Corner

I like my neighbors. I try to help them carry in groceries and rake their leaves with my dad. Sometimes my mom brings me to visit a grandma down the street. When I go to the park, we take turns on the swings and slide. I throw my trash in the trash can. We try to obey laws. My mom says if we all try to be good to each other in our city, we will live happy together.

Cammy Tenney

Age 5

We, at Character Connection would like to focus on helping parents access character materials by using the web site located at www.lindoncharacterconnection.com. If you are interested in receiving a monthly reminder of the character traits and access to resource materials, please e-mail your address to arlainea@isquaredinc.com

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