



Atascadero Rotary Club

Rotary Essay Contest Entry

27 February 2015

The 4 Way Test: A Cure

I have an illness. I've had it my whole life, but it's become especially intrusive these past few years. It affects my daily life at the high school and the relationships I have with those around me. The funny thing is, I'm not the only one with it. I'd be willing to suggest a majority of the teens here at AHS are suffering as well, and I have no doubt that the world's population is feeling a little under the weather too. It's called impulse, but is also known as tendency, and it's a habit we must all try to break. Symptoms include unfiltered thoughts, speaking without purpose, and even intentional harm to loved ones. I have an illness, but the great news is that I've found the cure. They call it the Four-Way Test.

This year marked the 14th annual "Take the Lead" conference at the Pavilion, and I was honored to attend. I had no idea I would walk away with the tools that I did. A small coin was handed out at the end of the program, containing the Four-Way Test. It has completely revolutionized the way I speak and treat those around me. I have a tendency to be blunt, rude, and misinformed. High school contains a chaotic and unrestrained flow of misused information, from gossip to rumors to small talk. It's easy to get lost in the storm; I myself have fallen victim to inaccurate and deceptive information. Things are said to gain popularity, pry emotions out of people, and for the sake of other's enjoyment. It's hard to know if what you hear is reliable, and

often times these bad habits of others can rub off onto you. I find myself repeating the gossip of others, unaware of it's untruthful origins. It's a sickness, and it spreads easily.

For this reason, I feel the coin, though small, is the most effective tool in combatting my illness. I keep it in my schoolbag, and each time I reach into my pencil pouch to grab something, I feel it. I am always reminded of it's presence, making it much easier to keep it's valuable questions in mind. One of the biggest changes I've experienced is my ability to remove unbeneficial information from my everyday language. I used to say whatever came to my mind, simply for the sake of speaking. I shyed away from awkward silences, causing me to babble constantly about irrelevant information. Now, I catch myself. When I feel such an occurrence coming on, I ask myself if my offered comments will be beneficial to those in the group. If not, I keep them to myself. I apply the same idea to my actions. I realize now that I hold all responsibility for my actions. What I choose to do- whether it be in class, at break, or on the weekends- is completely up to me. It should be my job to make sure everyone that comes into contact with me leaves in a better state than they were before. The coin has not only assisted me in blocking negative thoughts, but helps me to promote positive ones as well. I compliment those around me, make sure that "thank you"'s are properly allocated, and try hard to remind those I love how much I appreciate them.

In terms of untruthful words, I choose not to repeat what I hear. Even though they may be true, rumors are most often harmful to those in context. I find it much easier to ignore them with the help of the test. If AHS teens had the access to this tool, we could effectively stop negativity in it's tracks. I'm not sure I've ever seen a compliment received without a smile. We are not told often enough how beautiful and unordinary we are. As a student, I often begin to feel like I'm

just another kid among thousands. I don't feel special or deserving, and know without a doubt that other students feel the same. Those negative thoughts can flow through your veins and seep through your pores like the plague. In fact, they're spread in much the same way. Your attitude around others is easily picked up and mirrored.

Simply put, I *am* taking the lead, by setting a good example for those around me. I shed positive light on my environment and encourage others to do the same. Service above self? Precisely. With this tool, I can effectively do my job, which is make my presence felt and leave only positivity behind. The antibody has been found, the cure has been proven, and healing is in place. The Four-Way Test has transformed me, and I hope that in the future it can be traced as the source for a transformed population.

16th March, 2015

Rotary Essay Contest

Truth is crucial in everyday life. "Have you done the dishes? Did you take the dog out for a walk?" Not a lot of teenagers would answer truthfully since what's the problem with a little white lie? It doesn't matter whether the lies are small or big, it is still not telling the truth to a person that trusts you. It is horrible if I ever lie to my Mum, which I try never to do. Lies not only build up but they eventually tear you down and cause disputes and falling outs, especially between family members or friends. My friend lied to me telling me she had not seen my bracelet when in reality she had stolen it. Toxic friends who seriously lie are not needed in my daily life.

All people deserve equal treatment and especially in everyday life, every decision encountered should be fair to all those involved. I make sure to think of everyone before I do something large or small. When I wanted to take the salad my Mum had bought, I knew that was wrong because it is unfair that she bought it for herself and was going to eat it the next day. Now that is not a real serious decision but my Mum trusts me so it would not be fair to her. To make sure all are happy, decisions must be fair to everyone involved.

With friendship comes loyalty, trust, and love, and whenever there is a decision that does not build those up, then it is a wrong decision. In my daily life I am always with friends at school and outside of school. Everyday decisions affect our friendships and the strength of them. I always make sure not to say hurtful things or do anything jeopardising my friendship by making selfish decisions. The concept of goodwill and better friendships is vital to everyday life and the trust held in each person.

Putting others before yourself is necessary for whatever is said and done. Selfish desires are not usually beneficial to anyone concerned and therefore each decision must be carefully thought out before it is made, in daily life. I know that I wanted to tell my friend that it was not worth entering the same competition I was entering, just because I wanted a better chance at winning. But of course that was so selfish and only beneficial to me so, I told her to enter, and helped her get to the competition. Never would I make a serious decision so impulsively without thinking about whether it was beneficial to all concerned.

The 4-way test is something everybody should use when thinking, saying, or doing something. It not only would build better friendships but would be fair and truthful. Daily life can leave you worn out but every decision is still equally important to think about using the 4-way test to come to a conclusion.