

## The Four-Way Test

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When confronted with repetitive failures or obstacles most people have two responses: run and hide or work hard to get past it and accomplish the goal. You will do one of two things: run and hide or you will work even harder to accomplish your next goal. Throughout my short fourteen years, I have been faced with low self-esteem and doubts about my self-worth. I have told myself that I am too ugly or overweight to be loved and that no one is going to like me because I don't have as nice of things as others. I valued my self-worth by the number on the scale or on whether I had the newest iPhone or not. This mindset put pressure on my relationships with friends, family, and with myself. I have tried to apply checklists or tests to my life to change something about me, but they never worked. The first time I heard of the Four-Way Test, I thought it would have the same result--no result at all. The problem was that I wasn't really determined to change; I just told myself that I was. When I first tried to implement this test into my everyday life, I found that throwing myself into all four points didn't work. Truly, I ended up not really bothering to use it all. I decided the best approach would be to start out with one point a week and start to slowly add in the other three

Throughout the week I continually asked myself, Is this the truth? When I look in the mirror do I really hate how I look or do I hate how I think others are going to see me? Is my nose really as big as I think it is? And are wide knees really the only thing people are going to notice about me? With these questions, I finally started asking myself if my problem was with how I felt about how I looked or with how I thought others were going to perceive me because of my looks. When you have doubts like these, it is hard to think of yourself any other way. It doesn't matter if your mom tells you that you look beautiful, or if your friend says, "no, you're not fat,"

because all you ever wonder is “are they just telling me that to be nice?” As the week came to an end I had slowly begun to realize that my problem wasn't with the fact that, yes my nose might be bigger than usual, or that I may have bigger knees than most. My problem was with the lies that I kept telling myself--that I was not perfect. This wasn't helping me or anyone around me. Asking myself whether what I was telling myself was the truth or not lifted a huge burden.

Once I started focusing on what was true, I moved on to looking at fairness--is it fair to all concerned? While I had been successful in stopping most of the lies that I had been telling myself, there were some that were still there. The biggest lie? That no one will ever really love me. This wasn't because of how I felt about myself, but more about things that happened to me and around me when I was younger. When you lose so many people close to you, you start to expect that whoever is left will also hurt you. Because of this, I didn't hold people to as high of a standard as I should have; I was just glad that people were in my life even when they didn't treat me fairly. When I really sat down with myself and thought about this, I realized that expecting those around me to hurt me wasn't fair to them or to me. I knew that they deserved better and so did I. I knew that I was lucky to have the people around me that I did, and now I will never take it for granted again.

In addition to the first two questions of the Four-Way test, I added: “will it build goodwill and better friendships?” This question got me thinking. Telling myself that I was ugly, fat, or not worth being loved wasn't helping my attitude. And eventually, my attitude was affecting those around me. My friends got annoyed that I was always worried about how I looked, or about how others thought about me. Guys that I liked wouldn't stick around because I was so self-conscious and wary about my body that I would reject anything encouraging they might say. I never let

them actually show they cared about me. Or I would worry that if I actually ever opened up to a guy that he wouldn't stick around, and would have lost yet another person. My lack of self-confidence interfered with my ability to build good, strong relationships with people, which also led to my doubt about if others cared about me. When I think back to when my opinion of myself was at its lowest, I realize that the only thing keeping me together was my relationships. I didn't realize it at the time, but these relationships were hanging on by a thread. I honestly don't know where I would be now if those relationships fell through, or if I hadn't decided to change things. At this point in my life, I was so focused on myself and how I came off to others that I wasn't able to focus on others around me. Realizing how unhealthy this all became a major turning point in my journey.

“Will it be beneficial to all concerned?” The definition of beneficial is: favorable or advantageous; resulting in good. This question really got me thinking, do the decisions I make result in good for me and others? Tony Robbins said, "It is in your moments of decision that your destiny is shaped." He is saying that our destiny is shaped more by the small decisions we make every day than the big, life-changing choices like where to go to college, for example. That we decide when we wake up if today is going to be a good or bad day. Whether or not we are going to go out into the world with our cups half full or half empty. We decide whether or not we are going to be grateful for the events, both good and bad, that we experience. I believe the biggest decision you can make to yeild a positive result is to accept both the good and the bad, both the hard and the easy, and try to always stay positive. Staying positive has been a struggle for me. When it feels like you've never had an easy day in your life, try to stay positive. I think that the reason I could never accept good or positive things in my life, was because I was afraid that if I

got too happy it would be taken away. I felt like I didn't deserve something really great to happen to me. At that point in my life, I couldn't afford to lose anything else. But once I started making decisions that were in my better interest, things started to turn around. I started to look forward to going to school so that I could see my friends. I found joy in the dumb inside jokes, and I craved the moments when something so funny happened that we couldn't stop laughing. The camaraderie I felt with my friends was something I couldn't get anywhere else. My friends are the people who told me the truth about me, and as I thought about the Four-Way Test, I realized they ultimately saved me. They were my motivation for getting out of bed in the morning, and they still are. I know I've said this before, but without them, I still believe that I would be in a very dark place.

In the end, the Four-Way Test helped me to gain confidence in myself and truly helped me to become a better person. I realized some truths about myself that I wouldn't have otherwise known without it. While some people might think the test can only be applied to business deals, in actuality it can be applied to any decision. And something I will be sure to never forget is, "In right there is might" (Taylor 1)--doing what is right for all, rather than what is easy, gives us the most power.