

A Positive Response to Life's Ups and Downs Using the Four-Way Test

Life has its ups and downs, twists and turns, victories and failures. It involves a rollercoaster of emotions that can lead us through the highest of highs followed by the lowest of lows. When things are in our favor, all feels right with the world. However, it can be easy to be angry and upset when things don't go our way. This can lead to a cycle of negativity. In my life, the four-way test is a way of thinking that helps me to consider all aspects of a situation and choose the most positive response. By considering what is true, what is fair to all, what will build goodwill, and what will be beneficial to all, I am able to look outside of myself and choose positivity.

The first test involves identifying the truth. In my life and the lives of many teenagers in today's world, the use of social media (ex. Snapchat, Instagram) is a daily occurrence. I can see how social media posts can be misleading at times. For example, people might just post the good things that happen in their lives and nothing that shows the challenges that they go through. Individuals also can go out of their way to make a situation seem different from what it is to make themselves look better. This can impact the thoughts and feelings of others, making them feel negative about situations that aren't even true to begin with. When using social media, I use the first principle of the four-way test to ask myself if something is true before I post it. If it isn't true, I won't post it. This promotes more positive feelings for all.

The second test involves identifying if the situation is fair to all concerned. When I think of being fair to everyone, to me it means looking past what is just good for me. A situation in which I had to think about someone else and not myself was this past Summer when my favorite cat, Kona, got sick. He stopped eating and we noticed that he was getting fragile. We took him to the vet and found out that he had kidney and liver problems. My parents and I tried very hard to give him the medicine that he needed, but he wouldn't take it and continued to lose weight. He was still alive but we thought that he was suffering. In this case, I wanted him to stay with me longer, but I knew that it wasn't fair to let him stay and suffer. My parents and I had to make the hard decision to let him go peacefully. While it was heartbreaking to me, I know that this was the decision that was right and fair to Kona. Being fair means looking at what is right for everyone involved, not just myself. Knowing that I made this choice helps to turn this negative experience into a more positive one.

There is an old saying, "Be careful not to burn bridges you may need to cross again later". The third test involves identifying if the action or response will build goodwill and better friendships. When I am dealing with a negative situation in my life, I try to remember to act or react in a way that will not damage the relationships that I have built. An example of this relates to my baseball team tryouts. I had played with the same travel team for four years but did not make the top team during my 5th year of tryouts. I felt miserable and disappointed wanting to lash out about it to my teammates and previous coaches. However, I knew that this would not build goodwill or keep friendships. Instead, I joined another team for the year and worked hard. I tried out

again the next year and was put back on the team, where I remain today. I am glad that I did not “burn a bridge” and was able to keep the team dynamic positive.

The fourth test involves identifying if an action will be beneficial to all. It is easy to think of ourselves in situations; however, it feels much better to think of all people and consider their feelings. When I do this, I tend to feel better about myself, making me feel more positive about life. An example of this was during the Covid 19 lockdown when I met an online fitness/baseball coach named Coach Ballgame. I learned many things from him about how to have good sportsmanship and help others. I wanted to share that knowledge and help bring Coach Ballgame to Pennsylvania for a free camp for local baseball players next summer. He spread his message of having fun while playing baseball, which was a positive message that was beneficial to all. It was a little nerve-racking to put together this event, but in the end, I knew that it was the right thing to do because it promoted a positive message to everyone. After it was over, Coach Ballgame received messages from community members who thanked him and said that his message helped their children remember their love of baseball. This is how I know that it was worth it and that it was beneficial to all.

The Four-Way test is a helpful tool to navigate life with its neverending ups and downs. By asking myself these four questions, I can make good choices that lead to the most positive outcomes possible. This positivity helps to fuel future decisions and interactions with others. I will continue to use it as a basis for establishing truth, fairness, and goodwill for others, making situations beneficial for all.