

Why the Rotary Club Four-Way Test Should be Implemented in Schools Everywhere

By Anniah Rizvi

It is widely known that our childhood shapes the types of individuals we become. Ethics are best absorbed by young, impressionable minds. The Rotary Club Four-Way Test, the height of morality, is the perfect tool for schools because it teaches the importance of truth, fairness, and goodwill. The Four-Way Test consists of four key questions to ask oneself before thinking, acting, or speaking — Is it the truth? Is it fair to all concerned? Will it build goodwill and better friendships? Will it be beneficial to all concerned? Students should be encouraged to apply these questions to their daily lives.

Children can be quite imaginative when it comes to lies and excuses. As we all know, however, channelling that creativity into something more constructive is preferable! Many kids do not think before they speak. If they were taught to ask themselves the first question in the Rotary Club Four-Way Test, “is this the truth?” beforehand, they might be less likely to fabricate. Teaching the importance of truth at a young age will make kids honest and trustworthy adults. In the words of author John Ruskin, “To make your children capable of honesty is the beginning of education” (Ruskin).

Students need to be able to collaborate with their classmates effectively. When working on group projects, however, oftentimes there is at least one child that contributes little to nothing to the assignment. Or, alternatively, someone takes control and completes everything independently. Is this fair to all concerned? Absolutely not. Equal division of labor is important, for the sake of fairness, but also kids’ own education. If students consider the second question in the Rotary Club Four-Way Test, “is it fair to all concerned?” it will become clear that everyone

has the responsibility — even right — to complete the same amount of a group assignment as everyone else.

Playground politics can escalate into messy affairs. Whispered ridicule, bloody noses, exclusion- These scenarios are omnipresent in schools around the world but can be avoided if kids ask themselves the third question in the Rotary Club Four-Way Test before they act: “Will it build goodwill and better friendships?” After taking this simple step, they may decide that being cruel to others is not only hurtful but that it serves no purpose. Malevolence does not build goodwill and certainly not friendships, so why would it be necessary? Bullying is a huge problem not only in the real world but also in the virtual world of social media. Inappropriate comments and posts are increasing rates of depression and anxiety amongst teens. They are also leading to the detriment of students’ college applications; schools do not want to admit people with a negative online presence. If kids remember the third question in the Four-Way Test, however, they might think twice before clicking ‘post’.

More often than not, problems or disagreements in life are not so black-and-white. There is not always a clear line between good and bad, right and wrong. Children must be equipped to deal with these types of situations. If they ask themselves the fourth question in the Rotary Club Four-Way Test, “is it beneficial to all concerned?” they will be better prepared to make the compromises needed to resolve such issues. For example, if one child scribbles all over her best friend’s water bottle, but only because he snapped her pencils in half, it does not take an Ivy League professor of ethics to conclude that both are in the wrong. A resolution must be formed such that it is beneficial to both children. Instead of continued pranks or arguments, the students may decide to provide compensation for the other’s possession/s they damaged. This type of just

decision-making will be especially invaluable to kids later in life, when their concerns are perhaps weightier than water bottle defacement.

Pessimists may surmise that simply exposing kids to the Rotary Club Four-Way Test will not have any impact on their behavior. However, when Herbert J. Taylor initially created the test during the Great Depression, his company embraced and closely adhered to it. They are proof that it can be done. Kids, before they even graduate elementary school, would possess the same ethical skills as Taylor's employees did, and carry them into not only the rest of their academic lives but, later on, into the workplace. Because of constant technological innovation, it is uncertain what occupations will and will not be available in the future. That is why ensuring today's youth acquire 21st century skills is a common concern for schools across the globe. The Four-Way test is the ideal method to do so, as it is practical and straightforward.

Repeated mention of The Rotary Club Four-Way Test in schools will solidify it in children's minds and teach them how to be compassionate and responsible citizens. If kids apply the test to real-life situations, they will build better relationships and more successfully engage with their peers. Hence, the Rotary Club Four-Way Test should be implemented in schools everywhere.

Works Cited

"John Ruskin Quotes." BrainyQuote.com. BrainyMedia Inc, 2021. 25 March 2021.

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