

When I read about The Rotary 4-Way Test, I learned that the following principles can be used by everyone everywhere in every aspect of life. How can I apply “Is it the Truth?, Is it fair to all concerned?, Will it build goodwill and better friendships?, and Will it be beneficial to all concerned?” into the things I think, say and do? I think the foundation begins at home, but I can use these guiding principles in school, in extracurricular activities like Boy Scouts, relationships and friendships and eventually when I enter the workforce. Moral and ethical behavior transcends all walks of life, young and old, and we all are capable of being good human beings.

The most important rule, “Is it the Truth?” can be one many struggle with. We’ve all heard of “little white lies” or half-truths or bending the truth, but it is never okay to lie. A lie is a lie and lies can hurt. When we lie, it can weigh down our conscience and make us feel guilty. It may even keep us awake at night because we know we did something wrong. Trust is what holds relationships together. But one lie can ruin a relationship and it may never be able to be repaired. Being truthful shows consideration and that we care. Like most kids, I have done things I shouldn’t have such as playing video games more than I am allowed or saying I’ve completed a task when I haven’t and then lying to my mom about it. Things like that break trust between my mom and me. When I lie, my conscience feels unsettled and shameful for a couple days because I know inside that I should have told the truth to begin with. The consequences are worse when I am caught in a lie than if I had just told the truth. It’s like when I hold my breath for a long time; when I breathe out, it releases the tension and I feel better. Being honest can keep the peace in your heart and mind. Truth always wins and my relationships depend on it.

Life is the least fair concept in the world. I’m sure you’ve heard the phrase “life isn’t fair.” When we ask, “Is it fair to all concerned?” we must be considerate and think of others.

We may compare ourselves to others and find we don't have something they have like the latest video game or maybe they did better on a project than we did. We may think it isn't fair, but we strive to move forward in life no matter what we do or don't have. We must put ourselves in each other's shoes and ask if it's fair. In this dreadful time of the COVID-19 pandemic, we may feel that it isn't fair to need to wear masks, social distance, and not be able to visit special and fun places. We must be considerate and think of how practicing these safety measures protects those around us and will hopefully bring this pandemic under control. We are encouraged to wear masks and social distance and even though we may disagree; we all want to get through it, and this is just one step to do so for the benefit of all.

Think before you speak. We've all heard this before. Words and actions can hurt. When it comes to "Will it build goodwill and better friendships," we must think about how our words and actions may affect others. We have the choice to use actions and words to hurt or lift up someone else. Some people take advantage and make fun of others because of who they are. Sometimes it's because of what they look like or their religious beliefs. Sometimes it's because they excel in a particular area or they are an underperformer. We are all unique and special in our own ways. When I meet new people, I see the opportunity to be a good person and honestly just be a friend. I want to help if I can when someone needs it. It is up to us to choose how to act and react. This will determine if you will build goodwill and make and strengthen friendships. We need to be inclusive of everyone no matter how we may differ.

When I was in elementary school, kids tended to be classified into certain groups. I was considered a "nerd" because I did very well in all my subjects and scored high on tests. At the time, being called a nerd was not a compliment. It meant I was a showoff. It made me feel like being smart was not a good thing and I felt humiliated. I've come to understand now that usually when people make fun of or tease, it's because they may be insecure, and the

teasing was a way to hide those insecurities. I include everyone because it is better to have friends than enemies. When you show compassion to all those around you, you have people by your side wherever life takes you and they can help you when times are tough.

Finally, when it comes to “will it be beneficial to all concerned?” we must think of others, rather than ourselves. We must have integrity and do the right thing even when nobody's watching. I live in a house with my full-time working mom. There are numerous chores that need to be done regularly to maintain the house. I have some chores that are mine and my mom expects me to do them without asking, but sometimes she has to remind me. I can see that my mom appreciates it so much more when she doesn't have to remind me. I don't enjoy doing those things because I would rather be playing video games or watching TV, but it helps my mom so that she doesn't have to do more work after a long workday. I must decide who it benefits if I do not do my chores. I end up having to do them anyway and then I've lost any extra free time I may have had if I had done it on my own. No one benefits if I choose to be selfish. We both benefit though if I do the right and honest thing all the time.

The 4-Way Test should be a part of the foundation of our actions and behaviors. The principles strengthen our integrity, build respect, and lead to success in our relationships. If we can build a habit of using these principles every day, we will be rich in friendships and relationships that are built on trust, respect, fairness, and compassion. We set ourselves up to be of good moral character. I am hopeful that I can be an example to others in all aspects of my life, like in school and Boy Scouts, by using the principles of the 4-Way Test. These principles are the guiding light to my moral future.