



FAITH: A *FRESH TAKE*



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Rules You Can Break, and Those You Can't

Every morning on the way to work, I see the same two guys on the same two bicycles. One wears a helmet



and reflective gear. He sticks to the right side of the road and stops at all the red lights. The other sports massive black headphones with no helmet, and weaves

through traffic on both sides of the road, blowing through all the stoplights.

I wonder which one of them is going to get hit by a truck first.

It's obvious that the guy who's ignoring all the rules of the road has more chances of getting hurt.

There are times, however, when following the rules is dumb. I love video games, but a male friend of mine asked, "Isn't that a guy thing? Why are you playing a video game?" In his world, the rule is that girls don't play video games.

Everyone breaks the rules now and again – even people who consider themselves law-abiding citizens. Generally, rules are there to help, even when they feel like a drag. No eating in class? The teacher doesn't want you distracted. No jumping into the swimming pool? They don't want you cracking your skull open or getting hurt. No lying or cheating? This one is obvious.

How do you tell the difference between a rule that's good to follow and

a rule that should be disregarded?

I first ask myself whether the rule has my safety, security, health and future in mind. The answer clears things up pretty quickly. For example, if the rule says you have to wear a helmet while riding a bike, even though it might be uncomfortable and dorky, wearing it will protect me.

The "rule" that girls shouldn't play video games has absolutely nothing to do with safety and security – it has to do with sexism.

You can apply this to a lot of things. Maybe your parents gave you a curfew, and you're chafing over it and thinking of sneaking out. Does the curfew have your health in mind? It does. It means you'll sleep well and be awake and bright for school the next day.

The same applies to homework or studying for tests: Good grades will affect your future, so buckle down and do it.

Other "safety" rules you should follow include: no drinking or drugs, the rules of the road (whether you're on a bicycle or behind the wheel), rules at your house and rules at school. If you ever wonder why a certain rule is in place, feel free to ask.

But there are rules that can be broken. They include most fashion rules for guys and girls, the rules about who sits where in the cafeteria, who plays which video games, who goes to the school dance with whom, which sports team you can root for. Girls can play video games and guys can enjoy fashion.

Any rules having to do with sexism, racism, classism and discrimination are rules you can break with abandon.

— Karen Osbourne

(This is a CNS column.)

Parenting Pitfalls: How to Turn Flaws Into Faith

We are all flawed. From eating too many sweets and over-indulging in material items to shirking our responsibilities at times and giving in to greed.

As a parent, I'd love to say that I'm flawless, but I would be lying. I'm not as consistent as I should be: I give in when I shouldn't and I sweat the small stuff when there are bigger things to worry about.

As much as it is difficult to admit it, this parenting gig is full of trial and error and even though my children are teenagers, I'm still making mistakes left and right while doing my best to get it right.

What I have learned over the years is that I must accept my flaws, move forward and work toward faithful parenting. When I'm frustrated that my son's room is cluttered with wet towels and dirty socks, I have to learn to let go and put the responsibility on him. I have set up consequences for inappropriate behavior and have had to sit back and let my children learn that their flaws develop into teachable moments.

More importantly, I believe in allowing my children to accept their own flaws while I stress the fact that I have faith in them to succeed.

Having faith in your children and yourself, as a parent, is an important parenting strategy. As much as I want to save them from every disappointment, every falter and every consequence stemming from their actions, I can't. If my daughter doesn't dress out at PE, she must take the hit to her grade. If my son doesn't put his clothes in the hamper, he will have to suffer through a day with clothes that

can only be described as a smelly disaster.

I have to take my own consequences, too. When I forget to send lunch money, sign a permission slip or pick up milk on my way

home from work, I see the disappointment in my kids' eyes. I have to live with the guilt I experience when my daughter says we are "always" late and when my son gets embarrassed if I snort when I laugh.

Even though my flaws are just that – flaws – they are also proof that I am human as a parent. My kids know that I'm not perfect, and I hope that they understand that "perfect" is not reality. We all have flaws. We all face the consequences of our flaws. And, we all have to learn how to turn those flaws into faith – faith that we can improve, succeed and learn.

I may never get this parenting thing right, but if I can show my kids that I am learning and putting faith in the future, then maybe they will see that flaws are just a stepping stone to success – as long as faith is along for the ride.

— Shannon Philpott

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Sometimes It Is Just and Right to Question Situations or Events

Stories are great teaching tools. Many children's stories are written to educate as well as entertain.



As we grow, we begin thinking that education is something left to teachers. In reality, stories still teach us our most important lessons. I recently heard the following

story about monkeys that caused me to think differently.

Five monkeys are in an enclosed room. Hanging from the ceiling is a bunch of bananas. Under the bananas is a ladder. Eventually, one of the monkeys climbs the ladder to get the bananas. When it gets close, all of the monkeys are hit with a powerful and unpleasant spray of water.

Every time one monkey attempts to get the bananas, all of them are punished. Eventually, they stop trying because they know they will suffer because of the attempt.

Once they learn that lesson, one of the monkeys is replaced by one that doesn't know about the water. It sees the bananas and tries to get them. The other four monkeys, knowing what

will happen, pull the new one off the ladder. The new monkey learns that climbing the ladder causes pain and it stops attempting to get the bananas.

Soon after, another water-fearing monkey is replaced. The new monkey tries to get the bananas. Again, all of the monkeys pull it off the ladder, even the one that never experienced the pain of the water blast.

Eventually, the final monkey that experienced the blast is removed. The new monkey comes in and tries to get the bananas only to have the other four pull it down, not because they know the danger, but because that's what they've always done.

How often do we make decisions based upon what has always been done? How often do we fail to question those who have more experience?

Sometimes, experience is the reinforcement of bad ideas, much like monkeys not eating bananas that are there for the taking. There are times, however, when experience saves you from making mistakes.

Let's change the experiment slightly. Instead of a water blast, let's say

The lesson is to always question. Don't be afraid to let the answer affect your actions. If you're told they're poisonous but still are not sure, find some way to test the accuracy of that claim.

the bananas are a variety that makes monkeys sick. Each monkey learns that the bananas are dangerous. As others come in, they share that lesson. Eventually, all monkeys know the bananas shouldn't be eaten, even if they haven't eaten them.

How can you tell if you're a monkey avoiding bananas because they'll make you sick or if you're a monkey who won't eat bananas because of a fear of a water blast that no longer exists?

The lesson is to always question. Don't be afraid to let the answer affect your actions. If you're told they're poisonous but still are not sure, find some way to test the accuracy of that claim.

This page for, young adult Catholics and forming their faith

This is an online-only page dedicated to young adult Catholics, their interests, their needs, their challenges and their faith.

We're tapping into young adults who have been active in their parishes and who have reached out in faith to begin lives of their own.

The greatest changes in history have come because people questioned the rules. During the Civil War, doctors never washed their hands before surgery. They felt it wasted time. That changed when one person tried washing their hands and learned that fewer patients died as a result.

In baseball, people insisted umpires' mistakes were part of what made the game great. This year, for the first time, managers will be able to challenge umpires' rulings because fans saw that mistakes by umpires prevented their team from winning.

The only thing constant in life is change. Today's dangers could be tomorrow's pleasures. Don't be afraid of questioning, even something like a banana. Sometimes, if you give them a chance, you'll learn they're delicious.

— Erick Rommel

(This is a CNS column.)

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