

Rotary District 7390

Four Way Test Essay Contest Winners

First Place

Rotary's "Four Way Test"

Written by: Shelley Beamer, Dauphin County Technical School

Sponsored by: Colonial Park Rotary Club

As a teenager, I think I can say I know the ups and downs of a teen's life relatively well. In my opinion, teenagers today have life a lot harder than most teens' parents did. I think everyone needs a life philosophy to follow. Based on the fact that I am only a teenager, I can only understand the hardships of people my age. Rotary's "Four Way Test" is an amazing foundation for life. The first time I read it, I instantly began thinking about the way that this could help me in life. Drama, gossip, stress and tension are usually all really common in teens. Examining this "Four Way Test" could honestly help someone a lot! Think about these questions in every aspect of your life: Is it the truth? Is it fair to all concerned? Will it build good will and better friendships? And, Will it be beneficial to all concerned?

Is it the truth? How often do rumors and hurtful false information get spread around? Fairly often! Personally experiencing this, I know that gossip hurts! There are people out there who just talk and say things that are not the slightest bit factual! As friends talk, these sayings get spread quickly. Eventually, everyone begins to center all of their attention on a story that is not relevant to anything, making other's lives more important than their own. How would you feel if you were the center of that fictional story? So many people are insecure with themselves that they need to talk about others to make themselves feel better. If everyone would take the time to stop and think before they speak, a lot of conflicts would be avoided. Thinking about whether or not what you're saying is true will change a situation a lot! There is no excuse for telling lies! Lies aren't told in a good manner either! The truth can sometimes hurt, but it is the most honest and dignified way to handle any situation!

Is it fair to all concerned? Everyone deserves equal opportunity. The chance to speak and stand up for oneself should be presented to everybody! You constantly need to think about whether or not you are allowing everyone the same advantages. No one person should have the right to control another individual. I am always figuratively putting myself in other people's shoes. Trying to look at situations from a different point of view can help you realize if it is really a good decision. It has happened to me sometimes where I will only be thinking about myself and never look at anyone else's outcome. Taking a step back will help you understand each person's position a little better.

Will it build goodwill and better friendships? It isn't hard to make goodwill and better friendships if you follow the two previously mentioned rules. People respond to respect and honesty. In my opinion, if you master those two skills, you can build a good relationship with anyone you want to! The world has so much hate and animosity that I think people almost forget how to build good aspects in their lives. Good news is never the central item and the bad is always remembered first. Having goodwill and better friendships would certainly bring a happier attitude to anyone. If everybody in the world had a handful of friends whom they could always depend on, we would all be extremely lucky! Every action has a reaction. Before you act, stop and think. Try to imagine what the outcome of that action would be. Is it going to help you build a better friendship with a certain person or will it only generate more anger? Generally, nobody stops to think about these things. Life doesn't ever have time-outs, but never get the idea that you can't slow down your own pace to think about this and make a commitment to making wise decision.

Will it be beneficial to all concerned? I have learned that people are actually really selfish. Most people only ever see their own pain and problems. The next time that you have to make a choice, you should think about the effects it will have on people other than yourself. Think before you act! Just because a certain decision will work out great for you, it could be hurting someone else. Once again it goes back to the fact that people are selfish. Nobody take the time to think about others. If everyone actually thought about how their choices affect others, a lot of conflict would be saved! Even if the reaction to your action doesn't hurt

someone, is it benefiting them? Will it somehow help them out, too? You may be thinking, “Why does it matter if I am benefiting someone else!” It matters a lot! Karma: what goes around comes back around. If you want people to help you and benefit you when they make decisions, you need to show them that you can do that, too. If you want to see respect, you have to show it!

I did the best I could to sum up this Four Way Test in my own words. There is one ironic factor to this paper. My own opinion and logic is written above but I cannot honestly say that I follow this test. It is strange though because I understand these concepts perfectly. I observe the importance and the significance of why each of these questions should be fully examined on a regular basis. Life would be a lot easier if every person would accept this test and practice it regularly. I am not saying that I am a mean bully who spreads rumors and is self-centered; however, I am simply trying to say that following this is not always the easiest thing to do. I have grown up a little selfish myself. It isn't always the easiest thing to put others first. It's a skill that will come to me with age and maturity. As Morrie Schwartz said, “Love each other or die!”

Second Place

Rotary's “Four Way Test”

Written by: Samantha Schuetz, Mechanicsburg High School

Sponsored by: Mechanicsburg-North Rotary Club

One of the most fun and enjoyable experiences of my life was the service trip that I took with my youth group in the summer of 2007. My dad and I traveled with other volunteers from my church to a poor part of Virginia where homes are falling apart and residents did not have the means to fix them. Our goal was to assist an elderly woman by repairing holes in her roof, replacing her windows, and building her a back step as well as a wheelchair ramp. Another group similar to ours met up with us and offered us assistance. We hoped that working together and getting to know this woman would help us grow together in our faith. This summer trip really made me stop and think about how I apply the Four Way Test to my thoughts, actions and words in my daily life.

The first question that Rotary International's Four Way Test asks people is “Is it the truth?” When applying this to the service trip I took, I originally had trouble thinking of ways that this was relevant. Of course my motives were true; I wanted to help out someone in need while enjoying my time there, but this did not seem true enough. That was when I realized why I loved my experience so much. We went on the trip for one purpose. We wanted to serve and love God and one another. The environment was full of love and acceptance, a place where no one was pressured to act a certain way or only talk to certain people. All of us just wanted to have a good time and do something productive for once. The service trip I took was true. Every person was true to themselves and one another for a cause that everyone genuinely cared about. In no other point in my life have I ever felt that truthfulness and connection with my peers that I felt on the service trip. That is what makes it true to me.

The question of fairness was another one that was not blatantly obvious at first. Was it fair that the woman got her roof mended for free while we got to learn carpentry skills and grew closer to God? Was it fair that we were blessed to be able to help others while the woman in that house could not even help herself? I do not know the answers to these questions, but I do know that we did the best that we could to lend a hand to someone less fortunate. Some may think that learning to better people while others have their houses fixed is a fair tradeoff, but I disagree. It is not fair that the woman was in a situation where she had a hole in her roof for years while we were not. Life is never totally fair, but by working together, my group and I helped make her life a little bit more bearable.

The third question that Rotary International asks is “Will it bring goodwill and better friendships?” My only answer to this question is yes. All the time that I spent working and laughing with my peers on the service trip definitely got me some new friends and better relationships with old ones. Talking with the kind woman who lived in the house really showed us how grateful she was and showed us to be just as friendly in return. She was a little quiet but awfully friendly. Her neighborhood was filled with stereotypical gangsters, and her

children were involved in disreputable actions and did not have jobs. When we helped her install her air-conditioning, I had a chance to sit and talk with her, and I realized how different our situations really were. I understood people in her situation better and learned how to overlook financial disadvantages when interacting with new people. Working with other to overcome challenges and meeting new people from different backgrounds and places really opened my mind, eyes, and heart to both people with differences and those like me.

Finally, the Four Way Test tells people to consider the question, “Will it be beneficial to all concerned?” In relation to the service trip that I took in the summer of 2007, it truly was beneficial to all concerned. My new friends and I got to work together with the guidance of adults toward the common good of someone who needed it. We made a positive impact on her life, and we were able to love God by loving each other and achieving our initial goal. Being able to participate in a mutually beneficial activity gives one a wonderful feeling.

In the summer of 2007, I was able to travel from my home outside of Harrisburg, PA to a small town in Virginia where my help was needed. I was able to make new friends and live in kindness, and I was true to myself as well as to others that I encountered. I worked hard to make life a little more fair for someone else and worked toward a common good for all people involved. The trip that I took helped me realize the importance of these aspects in my daily life, and Rotary International’s Four Way Test efficiently gives the message that working truthfully for a common good should be an important part of every person’s life.

Third Place

Rotary’s “Four Way Test”

Written by: Ricardo Almeida, Carlisle High School

Sponsored by: Carlisle Rotary Club

Rotary’s “Four Way Test” relates to my life because I want my actions to be truthful and fair, build better will and friendships, and be beneficial to others. Here are a few examples of how my life relates to the “Four Way Test”.

Being truthful to others relates to my life because I don’t like to lie and make myself look like a bad person. Being truthful can be the best thing to do. For example, I once told a lie to my parents, and I got in a lot of trouble for not telling the truth. Not only can being truthful keep you out of trouble, but it can show how respectful you are towards others. Being truthful to others is only the first thing you should think about when you think, say, or do something. Another is being fair.

Being fair relates to me because I have come across times in my life when I have been unfair and that made me feel bad, and that is not how I want to feel or act. Saying, thinking, and doing unfair things is a wrong choice because it leads to further wrong decisions in life. Thinking, saying, or doing something that is truthful (like telling the truth when you do something wrong, instead of lying) or fair (like cheating on school work) can help you build a better will and friendships.

If you can think, say, or do good things, then you can build better friendships and a better will. When I help friends or family get through problems or mistakes, there is an example of building better will or friendships. Also, if you help others with a problem, you build a better bond, but it can also help you socially by helping you meet new people. Thinking, saying, or doing something that builds better will or friendships can also be beneficial to others.

Being beneficial to others relates to my everyday life because I like to say or do things that will give people more knowledge than before. For example, if someone needs some help with something in school, I help them so that they understand; that is being beneficial. Being beneficial towards others can help them when they are in big or small problems. Also, being beneficial makes me feel better about myself because I helped someone that needed help.

In conclusion, doing things that are truthful and fair, build better will or friendship, and are beneficial to others influences what you think, say, or do because it will make you think about others or about yourself.