

Choosing YOUR Path

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From the moment you were thrust into this world and your eyes opened, choices were offered by your surroundings.

"Congratulations Mr/Mrs Mom and Pop!", the doctor gives kudos to those that created you.

Strangers crowd around you as each wants you to react. Their voices and reactions carry tones of love, admiring and curiosity.



Your eyes scan across the faces telling you these things. Some are smiling, some are serious. You smile back and start feeling/building bonds.

The doctor, nurse fade away into memory, while others stay and care for you.

A crowd of strangers continue to come across your eyes. There are the fun ones who smile back at you, share toys and pretend not to smell your stinky diaper.



But, there are the grumpy ones . They want what you have, attempt to trick you into feeling bad about yourself, though they actually feel bad about themselves and use YOU as a distraction to their own low self-esteem.

Your personal invisible Book Of Paths is written to daily. Each day you awaken to the world, you pull out the book, read through some of the pages in your mind, and start to make decisions on how you are going to approach the people you will come across.



You previously made an entry in your book about "Brutus" and how he purposefully pushed you down. Now you re-read what you wrote and when he walks past you in the hallway, you force a frown on your face and speed up your walking speed to get past him.

Your book and the new actions towards Brutus pay off, as you avoided a possible bully. You didn't give him the chance to prove his power over you. You then make a mental task to re-read/re-live that bad moment so that you are always prepared.

The years fly by and soon schooling is over. You are on your way to the 'real world', a job, a career and NO MORE Brutus!



The honeymoon stage of your new job fades quickly as you become aware of other bullies. Some are exactly like Brutus, while others are better/worse. You make sure to write down each of the 'bad' ones in your mind's book, then frequently re-read them to remind yourself how there are bad people in the world and the methods you should use to avoid them.

Moving through your life and age, you are always aware that there are 'bad' things in the world and you should change yourself to deal with them. The ease of quickly sizing up people, becoming an emotional wall with instant in-your-face-frown, and changing how/where you walk really gives you the control you sought. The times 'they' got the upper-hand over you shrink, while you feel more empowered by your cunning skills of control.



In the local paper and online news websites, you see the main stories daily about 'murders', 'terrorism', 'corruption' and 'environmental destruction'. You label each of these 'Brutus' type 'bad' things and adjust yourself to live with them.

A story about 'those' people murdering others allows you to avoid them when 'those' types come across your path. An online article about another homeless person taking advantage of the Food Stamp program pays off when you have the evidence to answer another sign reading "Will Work For Food". You aren't stupid, and know the 'game' they are all playing.

The blight of the traffic jams, long lines at the stores, trash on the sidewalks are very obvious to your eyes.



Finally, as your career enters the conclusion, you pat yourself on your back to surviving all those rattle snake situations. You were bitten a few times, but, avoided the fangs of feared people more often than not. What a success you have become.

A retirement party is arranged and you show up with your personal mental rewards already in your pocket. You expect others to tell you how proud they are of your strength in character.

The party is being held at a local Art Gallery where you find your chair of honor and sit.

As you wait for the festivities, you look around. On the walls are posters from current and past events. The first poster you see is a multiple award winning play about love and charity. You read the reviews and see how each critic pours praise on how well it was written/performed. At the bottom, in the credits you see that it was created and performed by 'those' people. You think to yourself, (must be an exception to that group of people).

One of the posters is about a life-time achievement award given to a person who changed the lives of so many. Disadvantaged families were helped by the person's courage and efforts. The scholarships created by the gifts made guaranteed assistance forever. You smile at how 'some' people are just great that way.



It is then you notice a small newspaper article from years ago taped to the poster. It talks about how a 'homeless person' took advantage of the food stamps program. The name provided is the same as the award winner. You shrug and think (guess I didn't see that one coming).

Across the hall, an entire wall is filled with photos. You see a statement from the photographer above them. It reads

"Even in the darkest of places, changing your angle, or bringing your own light, allows you to see the good among the bad."

You look over the photos and see one with a traffic jam, but, the picture highlights the white fluffy clouds above and the deep blue sky beyond. Another photo shows throngs of customers pushing each other for sales at a big store, but, around the crowds you see the beautiful decorations that hard working employees put up.

Your eyes widen and your invisible book is brought out again. You think (weren't those pictures taken during that war we were in and all that killing?). Just as you think it, you see the section of photos dealing with that exact war. But, as your eyes scan across them, you see one with flowers growing around a broken building, an old man giving the homeless child an apple, and the soldier, covered in military equipment, hugging a mother crying over the loss of her child.

Your attention now turns to the people around you. One by one the crowd comes to you. Some of them you know, but, most of them seem like strangers.

You meet each one and notice something. Though they tell you words of congratulations, their faces are non-emotional. Lots of them can be seen smiling further back in the line, but, as they approach you, their smile disappears and either a blank or frown looking face greets you.



Once the line of people ends, you turn your face to a mirror behind you and notice a frown looking back. No matter how hard you smile, the permanent lines/parts of the face contain years of frowns built upon each other.

Your mind opens up the book once again. Rereading your own entries, it becomes very hard to find any that do not have a 'bad' tone to them. According to your book, the world is a 'bad' place with lots of 'bad' people. But, looking around at the gallery's posters, they shine the light on how the world has 'good' among the 'bad'.

"Hello.", comes a gruff sounding voice.

It sends shivers down your back.

"You may not remember me, but, I went to school with you. I am Brutus".

You have no words and just *gulp*.

"I just stopped by because I wanted to let you know how sorry I was for pushing you down that one day. My cat got run over that day, I got an F+ on my paper and my feelings were going crazy. Later, I wanted to share with you my pain and apologize, but, most of the time you avoided me, and when we did cross, your face was so filled with anger in the eyes, I couldn't see approaching you." He then shook my hand, gave me a note, and humbly walked away.

You open the note. The date and childlike scribble showed it had been written a week after you were pushed down. It contained the same words Brutus spoke to you just now.

Inside your mind, you close the negative book and create a new one. A smile emerges from your face, as a stranger walks by and smiles back at you.

