

The fruitful cycle of delayed gratification

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Often times when I am traveling throughout the city, it feels as though I have stepped into a failed food commercial, where mother and daughter are having a large McDonald's breakfast that is over the calorie amount their body needs. Their mouths filled with food to the point where they do not even take a break to breathe and realize exactly with what they are filling their bodies. I get to the back of the bus to see a family that is overwhelmed with bags filled with clothes that tell of a big a shopping spree. There they sit using up two chairs for their many clothes that were likely bought out of vanity. Whilst watching news on the television I am informed of a world where families take up mortgages that are far too costly for their undersized salary. I sit thinking that if these families had any sort of self-control they would lead lives that would allow them to clear their minds of the delusions of the world. They would see the real important issues in their lives rather than these egotistical actions, many in our modern-day society promote as standard. There is an excess of food in our homes yet our neighbors are grappling with where their next meal will come from. We live in a world where a shopping spree helps promote high esteem rather than spending quality time with family, as if holding on to materialistic possessions will somehow make us acknowledge our self worth. This world we live in unfortunately is a world that lacks self-control.

Self control is delaying a personal desire that can hinder our growth into strong-minded individuals. It is the idea of letting one's self control their actions before letting their egos become involved. With self-control we put our egos in check and let our mind guide us. Controlling oneself can start from anywhere to holding one's tongue to controlling one's emotions. By displaying delayed gratification we are able to live with one another despite major differences in race, religion, or culture. It is through self-control where a society can fully function with tolerance of others despite major differences in views. In becoming a better

individual myself, I have repeatedly looked to my faith in Islam as a guide, helping me maneuver my way through life. I was born and raised in the United States, but my faith is a strong tie to who I have become today. Most of my morals and foundation as a human being have come from my faith. From my faith I have learned to have self-control by perseverance, accepting a self-critical attitude, and supplicating to God when conflicts become overwhelming. My faith in Islam has turned me to a side of a world where giving back to others is more satisfying than giving to myself. In seeking the virtues of self-control, I have come to grasp that it is a constant battle within oneself that must be mentally fought off each time. It is like a muscle that needs to be in constant motion to get bigger and stronger, requiring a relentless effort. By battling against it each time we need to be consistent with practicing self-control, which has been the main struggle with which I deal. Unfortunately we will not always win each battle and I face this every day. I struggle with listening to my parents and assisting them around the house when I have a pile of school work that hovers over my shoulder like an albatross. At times I put my work first, rather than helping my family and what I have seen is that it affects them more than I assume. I've noticed that their body language changes, feeling as though I belittle them and that their problem is insignificant to me. I realize it is a terrible position to put my family in, since they are the closest to me and to put my desires before them is unfair. When I manage to have self-control when speaking to other specifically my parents I never regret such a situation but many times when I have succumbed to my ego I have always regretted the outcome. It is these battles that have caused many wounds but these internal scars have left a reminder that I must be stronger than my ego.

As a child I was told always to be conscious of my actions and as an adult I have carried this moral in many things I do, particularly in dealing with others. When I was walking to the

train station, I was put in a situation where I saw an elderly woman, who was lost and in need of help. I, at the moment, was rushing to go home to prepare for my organic chemistry final the next day. I noticed her asking bystanders for direction as they swiftly walked right passed her as if she was invisible to them. I realized she didn't speak English well, which was why so many others walked passed her. I was on my way to the train station as she asked me for help, with her fragmented words of her broken English. In that moment my heart felt as if it was at a crossroad, where there were two paths that I could have taken. One of which was admittedly self-centered, where I would have told her I did not know and continue on my way or the latter being that I assist the elderly woman to the best of my ability even if it meant having to wait an extra 15 minutes for the next train. At this moment I put my faith in perspective and had my faith direct me to my decision. As I did this I faintly remembered a verse in the Quran that mentions putting justice and others before yourself, delaying our personal desires, "O you who have faith! Be maintainers of justice and witnesses for the sake of God, even if it should be against yourselves or [your] parents and near relatives, and whether it be [someone] rich or poor, for God has a greater right over them. So do not follow [your] desires, lest you should be unfair, and if you distort [the testimony] or disregard [it], God is indeed well aware of what you do (4:135). It was lucid that the latter option that required me to exhibit self-control would be more satisfying than getting home as soon as I could. So I motioned to her that I would offer my help in directing her to her destination. Although the woman was unable to verbally tell me her appreciation, her smile that beamed from her face expressed her gratitude better than words could. From my perspective this was only a token of generosity but to her it seemed as though her day changed from the sight of a thunderous rain to the sun peering through as the clouds were clearing up. She was grateful for my attempt to help her. When she showed me the address she needed to reach, I

had never heard of the address; however, I tried my best to explain to her that I did not know where this place was. I was at a loss, hoping that I would aid the woman but I had never heard of the place before. While standing with her I thought of taking her to someone who would have a broader spectrum of the area. Unfortunately, because I was not very familiar with the area afar from my school, I explained to her through hand motions to follow me to the train station. This was in hopes that I could ask a train conductor for possible directions. As we continued to walk in that direction, I noticed how happy the older woman became and the serene approach she attained considering that I was helping her. Her willingness to receive my aid made me feel very blessed and grateful to give to someone other than myself and that I made someone smile out of mere generosity. It made a world of difference to this woman, and in doing so affected me, knowing that I made this impression on her. When we reached the train station booth, I told the man of the address and he aided her in the right direction. I was relieved that the man in the booth knew where the place was. The woman seemed to understand the directions. As I was explaining it to her, she showed me an expression of confidence that she knew where she needed to go. Although the woman did not speak, she smiled at me and with a faint voice said 'thank you'. At that moment I was whisked away by how much of a difference we can make in the world when we start with ourselves and when we practice self-control. Yes, I might have delayed carrying out my earlier aims but by doing so I made this elderly woman have faith in humanity.

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