

CHOICES

Scenario 19

Yummy cake

Your friend's Mom has baked a special chocolate cake for your friend's birthday party.

It's huge. It has three levels. On top is a little statue which is meant to be your friend.

And around the top layer are row after row of chocolate balls.

Yummy!

You love chocolate.

When you were watching her decorate it you could feel yourself drooling.

Now because you're a friend, and a next door neighbor, you are able to wander into the house at will.

Shortly before the party, when everyone is upstairs getting ready, you go in. You're all dressed up.

No one is around.

You go into the room with all the food.

And there in the middle is the yummy cake. Wow.

At this point your self control begins to go.

Why not try it out? No one will see. No one will know.

You eye the chocolate balls on the top layer.

What if you took one and popped it in your mouth? And you could take another one from the other side, to make it look like a pattern. And maybe a third? And a fourth?

What should you do?

A You take one of the chocolate balls. You eat it. Then another. And another.

What next?

The family come downstairs.

The party begins.

Later, everyone assembles to sing “Happy birthday” and cut the cake.

At that point, your friend’s mother notices what has happened to the cake.

“Has anyone touched the cake?”

No one says a thing.

Then she comes up to you.

“Is that chocolate on your cheek?”

You blush.

The secret is out.

You run from the house.

Think about it

All life is controlled by invisible rules.

Some are obvious, like “Do not steal” or “Do not lie”.

Others are understood. Like not touching other people’s possessions. Or not destroying things that don’t belong to you.

Imagine if a stranger picked up your school bag and started going through it. Or if someone reached into your lunch box and helped themselves to the cookie there. How would you feel?

The yummy cake story is about resisting temptation.

And while the outcome may not turn out to be that you’re caught – to break the invisible rules is still a bad thing.

“The ability to discipline yourself to delay gratification in the short term in order to enjoy greater rewards in the long term, is the prerequisite for success.”

Do you want to look at another scenario involving temptation? (Go to 13)

Do you want to try the scenario again? (Go to 19)

B You say to yourself, “It’s my friend’s cake. All I have to do is wait. Then I can have a piece – maybe two.”

What next?

The family come down the stairs.

The party starts.

Everyone has a wonderful time.

After it’s all over, your friend’s mother says,

“I know you love chocolate. I bet you were tempted.”

How did she know? Did she see you looking at the cake?

“So I made you a special little version of it – for being such a good friend.”

And she gives you a scaled down version of the cake. With little chocolate balls on it.

“Wow. Thank you.”

Think about it

Temptation is part of life. We can never get away from it. But what we do about it separates those who will do well in life and those who will have more trouble.

In 1972, a researcher called Walter Mischel at Stanford University did what has become known as the ‘marshmallow’ experiment. He offered small children a choice between a single marshmallow, or two. If they could resist eating one marshmallow for 15 minutes, they were given two marshmallows.

Then Professor Mischel studied what happened next. It turns out that those who could hold on tended to do better in school, and be healthier, and to have other better outcomes.

Sometimes in life giving way – to whatever temptation is in front of us – is not the best course of action. Many things in life require ‘delay of gratification’ – endurance and persistence. Learning an instrument, studying for a test, learning to be brave – all involve ‘not giving in’. Persistence and self control are important things.

The American philosopher Emerson said, “We gain the strength of the temptation we resist.”

Do you want to look at another scenario involving self control? (Go to 24)

Do you want to try the scenario again? (Go to 19)