

CHOICES

Scenario 6

Pocket Money

Your Dad says, “I wonder if you could help me at the store on Saturday?”

He runs a small hardware shop in town. He works very hard with long days – 9.00 til 5.30, six days a week. His shop is successful. He took a big risk opening it, but people love it.

He looks at you, pleadingly.

“I’m getting really, really tired. All the new stock has come in and it needs to be properly sorted in the storeroom. You won’t have to serve customers – just help me out for a few hours this week, please.”

You frown. “But I love sleeping in on Saturdays. And trying to get over school with some video games. And playing with my friends.”

“Look, you’ll not only be helping me, but I’ll pay you. What do you say?”

What should you do?

A You say, “Sorry. I really need to sleep in. And the work is boring. Find someone else.”

What next?

Saturday comes. You sleep in. You get up, feeling good. Dad is at the store. Your Mom looks at you in a strange way.

You watch TV. Then you play video games.

But it doesn’t seem as much fun as it should be.

You got what you wanted. You asserted yourself.

But you know you let your dad down.

You spend the rest of the day feeling vaguely guilty.

He finally comes in at six o'clock. He looks exhausted.

He ruffles your hair.

"Dad, I'm sorry," you say.

Think about it

How much do we owe our parents? Reciprocity is a fancy word for the idea that giving is a two way thing. Someone gives us something. We normally want to give something back.

Of course our natural instinct is to hang on to everything we've got. Our instinct is to be selfish. But is it the right thing to do?

Refusing a direct request, from someone we love, for no good reason (apart from laziness), is not really a worthy decision.

Do you want to look at another scenario involving parents? (Go to 9)

Do you want to try this scenario again? (Go to 6)

B You decide you have to help your Dad. On Saturday you do what he asked.

What next?

You head into the storeroom and start sorting the new stock. You're listening to your favorite music on the earbuds. You hum along.

After an hour, your dad comes in with a hot chocolate. He smiles at you.

"That's just wonderful," he says. He offers a high five. "I'm so pleased you came."

At lunchtime, he buys you a burger. You sit and chat. Your dad, who often seems so tired, looks really happy.

"You've made my day," he says.

And he gives you a big hug.

Think about it

"When we do things for other people, it makes us much more engaged and joyful (Dr. Albers, Cleveland Heath Clinic). That's good for our health and our happiness."

It's sometimes called a 'helper's high'. It refers to the pleasant hormones released in our body when we give. Giving means putting aside our selfish instincts. Perhaps having some short term discomfort. But the benefits to a relationship and our own happiness can be enormous.

Do you want to look at another scenario involving relatives? (Go to 3)

Do you want to try this scenario again? (Go to 6)