

Taking the Risk
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Consider for a moment that we all take risks and in so doing we commit ourselves to a course of action...and consequences...for better or for worse. That's risk.

A friend of mine called up recently to commiserate...he needed to "vent" and asked if I had time for him to tell me a story that had far reaching implications. "Of course," I said. Life's lessons come in a variety of forms.

He told me that he was at his desk and his wife had called him in a panic. She was at the food store in the town where they live and she said, "I'm driving out of the parking lot and I heard this ticking sound so I stopped and got out and there's a nail or some kind of bolt in the rear tire. What should I do?"

He replied, "Where are you?"

"At the food store..." she responded. "I have to get home 'cause I have dinner with my classmates before our class."

"Go to (*insert tire store name*) and have them look at it and see if it can be fixed."

She told him, "But, I have a dinner at five with friends and then class...I'll be late. I'm going to drive it home and take the other car." (Men: has this ever happened to you?)

Obviously, his advice wasn't the desired response. He repeated, "Take the car to get it looked at...it's only a mile from where you are."

"No...I'm going to take it home. I don't have time to do that...I'm going to be late for dinner and then class as it is."

At this dramatic juncture in the narrative, he says to me: "Why was I having this discussion? Why call me if you aren't going to follow my advice?"

He said he told her again, "Take the car to the tire place and have them look at it."

"Well," she said... "I'll see." She hung up.

Maybe 15 minutes later, she called him back. "I'm at the tire place...the tire is flat. They say it's some type of nail or something and it's too big and can't be fixed...they have to replace the tire. Don't we need new tires?"

My friend says he was going to have new tires put on before winter anyway so he told her to get an estimate and call back, which she did. She told him four new tires were going to cost \$700 but they were having a sale (*some sale!*). He told her to have them do it.

“But, they can’t do it for another hour (it was mid-afternoon) and now I don’t have any way of getting home. I’m going to miss dinner and my class if I have to wait here.”

There was a long pause at this point as my friend explained, slowly and calmly, what he told her: to call one of their neighbors and see if they could pick her up and take her home... and then take the other car to class. Then, as an alternative, he offered to leave work, go home and take her to her class. She said that would take too long...but that calling the neighbor seemed that was the only thing to do.

So, she called their neighbor who picked her up, took her home where she got the other car and met with her friends for dinner and made the class on time. All’s well that ends well.

If there’s a happy ending it is this: Had she driven home as she had wanted, the tire would have gone flat somewhere in between and she would have been on the side of some road and would have had to wait for AAA to come and rescue her, which would have taken much longer. Furthermore, the tires were going to be replaced in a few weeks anyway, sale or no sale.

There’s a moral, of course. *Risk*. There are times when we have plans and some event interrupts our plans and we are given the opportunity for a choice, and the choice is ours to make. In this case, the wife called her husband for advice (which, to her credit, she ultimately decided to take), but was on the verge of ignoring (*then why bother to*

call the husband you ask). She made the right choice, despite the setback in her plans, but it was the safe course of action to take given the alternative *that she didn't consider*.

How often are we faced with a choice about some task or job and we ignore the sound advice about “taking the safe course” of action? Do we consider the “what if” things don't work out the way we expect or want? It's like driving through a large and, potentially deep, water-filled pond in a road. Do we proceed thinking it isn't that deep and we'll make it to the other side, or do we stop and consider, “what if it is too deep and the car stalls...then what do I do?” Consequences...what happens if it doesn't work out the way you want?

Too often we move boldly ahead and without giving consideration to the consequences of our action of taking a shortcut that might result in a personal injury or property loss, or leave us stranded in the middle of nowhere. We witness these events daily on the highway and at the workplace. On the highway, somebody attempts passing another vehicle only to realize their estimate of the time it takes to pass the other vehicle is inaccurate? What then?

The dashboard oil light suddenly goes on signaling a loss of oil or oil pressure... “Should I keep driving?” (The answer here is NO!)

At work, somebody disables a machine guard on a table saw assuming that they will be skilled enough not to let the piece they are cutting get away from them, thus exposing them to injury. What if they goof? What then? What's at risk? Your fingers? Your hand? The "*It won't happen*" theory often comes into play with gruesome results.

When we are looking to hire a person and we call for a reference and we are told, "This person was employed by us...that is about all I can tell you about him," do you dig further? Do you pursue the matter, asking if the person in question could be recommended for hire? What if the person on the phone is honest and tells you confidentially (because you and this person are old friends and is reliable) that you would be making a *big mistake* by hiring that applicant... do you take the risk and make the offer just the same, regardless, because you need to fill a position? What are the potential consequences...a workers' comp claim? A vehicle collision with property damage and complicated liability issues?

Take the safe course of action...always consider what if things don't go as you expect...what then?

As for my friend, he and his wife are still married, they still talk to each other, and she still seeks his advice...and ignores it. Such is life.