The Land of the Longhorns

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Four Quadrants of Decision Making

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As anyone who knows me will attest, I am FAAAAAR from perfect. In fact, I have perfected the very concept of being flawed… That said, I do strive on a daily basis to become a better functioning person who contributes to society, both personally and professionally, and I have to say I am pleased with the progress I have shown in this resolve. I just know I have many miles to go before I sleep with this endeavor. But, as I am wont to say, I will NOT fail for lack of trying, so I continually look for better, more effective and efficient ways of conducting myself so as to be a part of the movement for “good,” fighting back against my inclinations.

Along with simply maintaining a reflective orientation for everything I do – I TRULY believe the process of reflection is what leads to growth – overtime I developed an orientation to decision making/treating others. At the top of this letter, I dropped in a simple chart that represents what I am discussing here. In its crude representation (although I AM proud of the fact I learned how to make such a fascinating display… lol) I have laid out the “Four Quadrants of Decision Making” (as I like to call it) that directs my thinking as I go about living my life. To put a fine point on it, this chart represents the outcomes of a decision and the motivation behind it. I believe this is important as I also believe we need to come from a place of honor as we live this life, and, much is the pity, sometimes that just doesn’t happen.

Soooo, here is how I use this chart. When I make a decision, I run it through a simple filter to see where on the table my motivation and the result of that decision lands. Where I want to live is, of course, in the upper right hand corner in the green (green for go, red for stop – yes, this IS a complex table…). That means if I am in the green I have made the correct decision for all the right reasons. If I am able to live in that area of the table for the majority of the time, I am one happy camper; however, (and that is a HUGE “however”) the reality is I don’t live there all of the time – remember how I started this puppy off with the idea that I am not perfect – well, here is where that idea comes home to roost. The fact of the matter is I venture into the other corners of the table waaaaay too often for my liking. The important thing is I KNOW this about myself, and I am able to reflect on this and self-correct as I continue with my life.

Obviously, where I want to avoid like the plague is the bottom left corner – the RED corner. When I venture into that part of the world, that means something is amiss. I NEED to do something about it. Being in the “Red Zone” is destructive to me and to those around me, basically tearing away at the fabric of who I am and any relationships I have. That is NOT a good thing. But, once again, as long as I maintain my principle of remaining reflective and deconstruct my thinking behind what I am doing, I am USUALLY able to get things going the right way again.

Now, the areas of greatest struggle for me are those pesky yellow areas as I am able to rationalize with the best of them with saying things like, “As long as the end results are alright, it doesn’t matter how I got there, “(top left) or, “I had the best intentions in mind even if that was a bad decision” (bottom right). AAAAUUUUGGGGHHH. But, once again – not an excuse, simply a reality – I am HUMAN, thus I am not perfect.

So, all in all, I know I am flawed. I know I have work to do to be better – a better husband, father, person, friend, educator… I just HAVE to maintain a vigilant eye toward progress to that promised land of the upper right hand corner. If I do that, chances are most things will turn out alright. And, I can honestly say even if they don’t turn out alright, I at least know deep down that I am trying, and I recognize I am a work in progress. To me, that matters. ☺