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The Effects of Staying True to Oneself

In a world where there are many outside forces that pressure people to become something they are not or change the way they act and/or behave, it becomes challenging to stay true to oneself. Staying true to oneself is not only a choice, but a battle against the external demands emanating from those trying to change people who are not like them. For this reason, it requires courage and inner strength to do so. The more unique and different someone is from the people around him/her only increases the difficulty associated with not conforming to how other people are, which is often a much easier choice. Unfortunately, by submitting to conformity, one only loses his/her true character and individuality, and lead to the tragedy of mediocrity. **Staying true to oneself creates many effects, the most significant of which are the experiencing of negative outcomes, the ability to be a hero for others, and/or the attainment of a clearer understanding of life.**

Firstly, by staying true to oneself, one may have negative experiences such as being ostracized, or cause others to grow jealous and envious of them. In the novel, *For The Glory*, Eric Liddell is ostracized by his fellow Britons for choosing not to run for England in the Olympics on a Sunday race as it was against his personal beliefs to do

so. The outcome of his decision demonstrates that while one may choose to act in a certain way in order to adhere to his or her personal philosophy, the general populous or people around oneself dislike and disapprove of the choice they made. Furthermore, due to their disapproval, the individual is often ostracized and/or made fun of for the choice he or she committed to. In spite of harsh criticism against Liddell, he remained true to his Christian beliefs and served as an inspiration for others to remain true to themselves in the face of opposition. In the novel, *A Separate Peace*, Finny causes Gene to be jealous and envious of him when he is able to wear a pink shirt and the Devon tie as a belt during tea with the headmaster of their school. Wearing such clothing in the manner in which he did was perceived as offensive, however, Finny talked his way out of getting in trouble. As a result of Finny's great individualism and non-conformist spirit, he has the ability to bend rules without caring about what others may think of him. Unfortunately, by staying true to himself, Finny's behavior instills much jealousy and envy in Gene as Gene does not have the same capability as Finny to easily avoid being in trouble. The jealousy and envy Gene has for Finny proved to be a splinter in their relationship, further demonstrating that individuals are easily begrudged when they cannot have a quality or attribute that someone else has due to the other person being true to himself or herself. While staying true to oneself often means that an individual has strong character, the people associated with a particular individual may not approve of his/her choices and may also grow jealous and/or envious of the individual's capabilities gained by staying true to himself or herself.

Secondly, by staying true to oneself, one has an increased ability to be a hero for others. In the novel, *In the Time of the Butterflies*, Minerva and Mate converted the Mirabal house into a storehouse to stockpile weapons and ammunition in order to fight against the Trujillo dictatorship. They took great risks by converting their house into a storehouse for weapons as their actions were punishable by death. Yet, by staying true to their character and their strong convictions, Mate, and especially Minerva, became key revolutionaries in the Dominican Republic. Unlike many stories of heroes and protagonists, such as those found in the Greek myths, the Mirabal sisters did not fight for independence solely for personal reasons. Instead, they had a nobler mission which was to fight for their country and their fellow citizens' right to freedom. In spite of their deaths before the end of Trujillo's dictatorship, their dedication to freeing the people of the Dominican Republic inspired and propelled their countrymen to forge on and fight in the revolution which was eventually successful. In the novel, *Dune*, the protagonist, Paul Atreides leads the Fremen (local tribespeople of the planet Arrakis) against the corrupt emperor of Arrakis and the evil Harkonnen family (rivals of the Atreides family). Due to the fact that Paul did not follow the footsteps of his father or his relatives by becoming a businessman or politician, Paul was able to go on his own path of self-discovery. This caused him to be a strong individual that stood up for what was right. Even in the face of danger as he led the Fremen against the emperor and the Harkonnens, he knew that he had to stay true to himself by ending the corruption on Arrakis. Paul's actions reflect that of a hero as he liberated the people of Arrakis by remaining steadfast to his character in perilous scenarios. When individuals stay true to

themselves, they are enabled to be heroes for others as they have unwavering dedication to doing what is right according to their moral philosophy.

Finally, by staying true to oneself, one gains a clearer perspective on the world around him/her. In the novel, *Fahrenheit 451*, Montag's realization during his sick day that the government acting in a way to benefit itself while harming society by censoring knowledge, mainly through burning books, inspired him to spread this epiphany to others. Montag's desire to enlighten his fellow citizens (who had been accustomed to do or not do whatever was ordained in law by the government) in the face of harsh opposition and potential punishment by the government demonstrates his strong character and identity. His later fleeing from the city to escape the governments search as he committed crimes against them such as spreading knowledge through books and poetry as well as killing and sabotaging firemen led him to a place far outside of the city to a hippie camp. There he discovered what it meant to leave a lasting legacy in life as well as what living a purposeful life entailed, a realization that would have never occurred if he had not stayed true to his character. In my own life, the friends I made during my freshman year began leaving me out and then cut off ties with me all within the month of November last year. It became clear that I was just being used for help with school and homework. In spite of the difficulty and emotional anguish it caused me, I was able to persevere with the loving guidance of my parents. By remaining true to my character, I eventually came to the realization that the people who I thought were my friends were not friends after all. Remaining true to myself also allowed me to be true to my feelings and talk to my parents and other mentors about it. Additionally, it

allowed me to be more empathetic. I realized, once more, that the ones who truly matter in life are those who genuinely care about me and love me, as well as those who are sincere and are seeking a genuine relationship. As a result of staying true to myself while my peers expressed a lack of dependability and sincerity, I gained a clearer and enhanced viewpoint on life and a deeper understanding of myself, and others. It was a painful but meaningful journey. It was an experience that offered valuable life lessons, including a greater appreciation for my family. While it can be difficult and challenging to remain true to oneself, doing so has a fruitful effect as one's eyes are opened and a deeper understanding of the world around him or her is achieved.

In all, staying true to oneself allows an individual to be unique and follow their moral compass and let it guide them. Staying true to oneself does not always result in completely beneficial outcomes for the individual. Even in the face of self-doubt, jealousy, envy and criticism, the individual still sees the light at the end of the tunnel and remains true to himself or herself through trying times, knowing that staying true to their character is more important than temporary disbelief, jealousy, envy, and self-doubt. Additionally, by staying true to oneself, individuals are more capable of being valiant and heroic in a way that benefits others. These individuals adhere to what they believe is right, defending and fighting for others, not just themselves. Finally, by staying true to oneself, an individual is able to steer past the cloudiness in his or her immediate life and ascertain new knowledge and a new outlook on life. Ultimately, by staying true to and trusting oneself, one may experience negativity through means of criticism, jealousy and envy towards them, one may become enabled to be a savior for others, and one may

gain new insights on their life and constantly strive to be a better, nobler version of themselves.

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