THE FOX AND THE GOAT by Aesop

A Fox one day fell into a deep well and could find no means of escape. A Goat, overcome with thirst, came to the same well, and seeing the Fox, inquired if the water was good. Concealing his sad plight under a merry guise, the Fox indulged in a lavish praise of the water, saying it was excellent beyond measure, and encouraging him to descend. The Goat, mindful only of his thirst, thoughtlessly jumped down, but just as he drank, the Fox informed him of the difficulty they were both in and suggested a scheme for their common escape. "If," said he, "you will place your forefeet upon the wall and bend your head, I will run up your back and escape, and will help you out afterwards." The Goat readily assented and the Fox leaped upon his back. Steadying himself with the Goat’s horns, he safely reached the mouth of the well and made off as fast as he could. When the Goat upbraided him for breaking his promise, he turned around and cried out, "You foolish old fellow! If you had as many brains in your head as you have hairs in your beard, you would never have gone down before you had inspected the way up, nor have exposed yourself to dangers from which you had no means of escape."

LIFE LESSONS: Look before you leap. Do nothing without a regard to the consequences.

We often want to blame others for the bad things that are happening to us. But others don’t cause our misfortunes (bad luck) or troubles. A person’s misfortunes and troubles are due to his or her own actions. When you choose your behavior (through your actions), you choose your consequences.

The first rule of life is that every action has a consequence. Therefore, everything in life is action and consequence. By definition, a consequence is a result or effect of an action. This is a very important lesson to understand: You are free to make whatever choice you want, but you are not free from the consequences of that choice.

The consequences of the choices you make can change your life. The actions you take can be devastating (cause someone severe and overwhelming grief), harmful, or fatal. For example, unprotected sex can result in an unwanted pregnancy. Drug abuse can lead to drug addiction, serious bodily injury or death, or poor academic performance. Failure to submit homework or projects on time, and to prepare for exams, will affect your chances of graduation and going to college. If you betray the trust of others (i.e., you lie or gossip), you will likely lose their trust and respect, and perhaps their friendship; even worse, this might lead to retribution (punishment considered fully deserved). Unfortunately for many, these personal, social, and academic consequences are something that they will regret for the rest of their life. Therefore, be sure of what you do before you do it because sometimes it cannot be undone.

A wise person will debate every advantage and disadvantage before beginning a course of action. Good judgment requires that we deliberate (fully consider and done in an unhurried way) and leave nothing to chance. Know that to a large extent, your future is determined by the decisions and actions you make today, including your future career and quality of life.

Before you commit to something, think first about what you are getting into. Exercise caution, that is, care taken to avoid danger or mistakes. As often said, “Check yourself before you wreck yourself!”