

## Habits – Good, Bad, and Mundane (Part 3)

Category General Series

Date July 28, 2008

Most often we are oblivious to our personal habits—which makes sense since habits are patterns of behavior that we engage automatically. Sometimes when some of our personal habits are in conflict with our core values, work ethics, or core principles, we have the benefit of warning signs—or red flags—that pop up all around us. The problem, however, is that we are so focused on other things, and we miss these subtle or sometimes obvious signs.

Occasionally these subtle signs emerge from people or places that we least expect. Other times, these signs represent or embody the negative consequences of the very habit that is in conflict with our core values, work ethics, or core principles.

### The Red Flags

**Sometimes red flags, or warning signs, emerge. These signs often embody the dire consequences of the very habit to which we are oblivious.**

Now let's wrap up our story (started in Part 1) about a time in the life of the Browne family—Laura, Peter, Mariah, and Michael.

*Laura's mind immediately flashed back to two weeks ago. She had initiated an argument with Peter, which had taken a turn for the worst. The argument had become heated, with Laura raising her voice intermittently to get her point across and Peter responding in kind. It was late in the evening and the kids had been tucked in bed—supposedly asleep. During their little skirmish, Michael had tapped on their bedroom door—promptly interrupting their argument—to complain that he could not sleep. Laura had attended to her son and subsequently deferred her argument with Peter till another time.*

*Later that evening, after Michael revealed his reason for disliking the yellow colonial house, Laura approached Peter. The kids were already in bed and the after-dinner chores were all done.*

*"Do you realize what Michael did tonight," said Laura.*

*Peter nodded, adding "Yep. He is a very smart kid."*

*"So, all these months when we argued, he heard everything. Everything Peter!"*

*"We should not have raised our voices all those times," said Peter.*

*"Now we know. I did not realize our voices carried through the walls so easily," replied Laura.*

*They were both silent for a moment. They both seemed to be weighing the potential impact of their actions on their son.*

*"Each time he came knocking on our door saying he could not sleep, he really was trying to breakup our fight—as he put it," said Laura in a very soft voice, breaking the silence.*

*"Peter, do you realize this pattern started about six months ago?"*

*"What pattern?" replied Peter.*

*"You know...these arguments that we've been having. Six months ago you approached me about staying late after work on Fridays to hang out with the guys. Ever since then we have had these arguments late on Friday nights after you return home. Now think back Peter. When did our son begin knocking on our door?"*

*Laura looked straight at Peter, waiting for him to respond. Her eyes were tiring.*

*"You know what, you are right. And come to think of it, the only times when he's come knocking on our door—when he should have been sleeping—have been when we were arguing. I can't think of any other time when he did this. How come we did not notice this before now?"*

*"Because we've been focused on other things, Peter. Here we are, trying to raise our children well, trying to instill good family values in them...and at the same time we are engaged in this habit—this stupid habit where we bicker and raise our voices at each other. The children see and hear the whole thing. What are they supposed to think?"*

*"Well, one thing's for sure—this is going to stop."*

*"I agree," added Laura.*

*"Honey, Friday night has always been our family time. I am sorry I took that time away from us. I will talk to the guys at work and explain that I cannot join them after hours on Fridays anymore."*

*"Maybe once a month you can join them on Friday. Some of the supervisors and managers also meet on Thursdays after work, don't they? Perhaps you can join them on Thursdays, instead of Fridays," Laura responded.*

*Peter looked at Laura, with a smile on his face. Then he chuckled and said "While we are at it, what other habits do we have that we need to reconsider?"*

*Laura responded with a yawn. It was getting late and they both had to be up the next day for their morning family routine.*

*"I am sorry Peter. I am getting tired. Let's continue this conversation tomorrow."*

*"What do we tell Michael in the meantime? He is decidedly against the yellow colonial," Peter said.*

*Laura was unsure of her response. She leaned her head back on the sofa, staring up at the ceiling.*

*"I could tell him that we have decided to go with the gray contemporary house instead," said Peter, looking in Laura's direction.*

*"Don't you dare," Laura responded promptly. Her eyes were wide open now and fully engaged with Peter's.*

*"Why don't we both have a talk with him tomorrow evening? We should explain to him that we have not been fighting and that we've been having a disagreement and we are sorry that he's had to hear it all these times."*

*Peter promptly added, "We should also let him know that we have settled our disagreement and that we will not be fighting anymore."*

*"Don't say we were fighting, Peter," said Laura.*

*"But we were."*

*"Yes, yes. But don't say it. Call it a disagreement," urged Laura.*

*"That's a big word. Do you think he'll understand that word?" said Peter.*

*"He is seven. He knows more words than you realize," replied Laura.*

*"He is a smart kid alright. I wonder which side of the family he got that from?"*

*"Clearly my side," said Laura and Peter, in unison.*

## About the Author



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