

Reach Out



FINDING YOUR PLACE IN THE COMMUNITY

Week 12: Commitment

People say, “I promise” so much that the phrase has lost its meaning. A promise used to be all it took to insure that someone would do something they said they would. A person’s word was their reputation, and it meant a lot to maintain it. Today, most people’s promises are empty. So what is the point in making promises that no one intends to keep? It used to be that a handshake was all it took to insure someone’s commitment. Today, contract after contract must be signed by those involved and witnesses and government officials to bind any sort of agreement. It’s sad that no one will just commit to what they promise.

Learning to commit begins at an early age, and it is an important skill to master, as it will help you to earn the trust of those around you. When we’re young, we are asked to commit to attending school regularly; we commit to returning borrowed library books; we commit to keeping our friend’s secret crush; you commit to doing our homework, to attending practices for activities we are involved in, to meeting our friends on time at the movies, to being home before our curfew. Life is full of commitments.

So why do we so often choose to promise to commit and then not do what we say we’ll do? Maybe it seems easier to not do something. In the immediate moment, that may be true, but when you choose to break a commitment, you lose the respect and trust of the person who was relying on you, and trust takes a lot more time to earn than it does to lose. It takes months or even years of commitment to earn someone’s trust, but only one or two broken promises to lose it all again. Is all that hard work worthwhile? Absolutely. Earning trust opens opportunities that can pave your way to success. If you are a trustworthy person who does what you say you’ll do, then people will bend over backwards to do things for you, and you will form quality relationships with people. On the other hand, breaking people’s trust can get you in trouble and damage your relationships with other people.

Alexander Hamilton said, “A promise must never be broken,” and we all know how successful he was.

Challenge: Commitment

Think about the things you are committed to. Are you following through with what you said you’d do? If you’re having trouble thinking of an example, consider drama. You committed to check the callboard every day, to work to keep your grades up, and to attend rehearsals for which you’re called - are you doing all those things to your best ability?

Pay attention to when you tell someone you’ll do something or say, “I promise.” Do you follow through. Help bring integrity back to the word “promise” by only saying it when you mean it. Evaluate your commitments, and make sure you are a person who can be trusted and relied on.