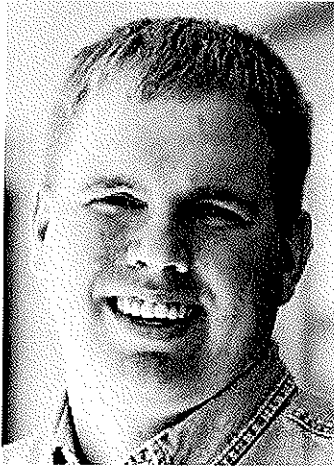


# HIS VIEW: Personal Responsibility: no laughing matter

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I learned those two words as a child and continue to live by them on a daily basis. They are also two words that seem to be quickly escaping the vocabulary of most Americans.

It's really not that hard of a concept to understand. If you do something wrong you fess up and admit it, and then you do everything in your power to make things right again. In that same vein, you take responsibility for your own behavior and don't arrogantly rely on others to bail you out when you're in a pinch. Accepting help from friends is one thing - expecting it is a totally different ballgame.

It's the way I handle things in both life and work, and I really wish more people felt the same way.

Those in my generation are products of the 1990s and the "self-esteem" movement brought about by the leading child experts of the decade. Soccer and youth ball games morphed from a real sport into a perverted festival of feelings where everyone won a trophy so that nobody's feelings were hurt. Gone were the terms "winners" and "losers" and, consequently, there was never an urge to do better.

After all, why do better when you're always a winner or if there is always a prize at the end? What happened to good old fashioned losing? Without it, the bar gets set pretty low and, frankly, that mentality has come back to bite us in the ass.

Just the other day I overheard a conversation where an older brother was trying to convince his younger brother to read some books. I was enamored by the way the elder explained the exciting tale that awaited the reader. As an avid connoisseur of books, I enjoy passing on my favorites from my childhood to my nieces, nephews and younger cousins.

I was a little shocked when junior wasn't too excited about reading. Now, imagine my surprise when his mom piped up saying "why don't you give him an incentive to read it?"

Incentive? To read?

What about the joy of getting lost in a good story, letting your imagination run wild and forcing yourself to put it down so you can go to sleep? That is, at least for me, incentive enough to curl up with any book.

Reading incentives are nothing new. In the mid-1990s Pizza Hut offered a program for students called "Book It" wherein if you read 10 books, certified by your teacher, you won a free personal pan pizza. It's programs such as this that led many generations down the path of a half "quid pro quo" outlook on life that is "what are you going to do for me."

But how is anyone to learn personal responsibility when their elected leaders in Congress refuse to put their big girl panties on and deal with the looming economic crisis that is bound to hit us? Regardless of how the debt ceiling matter is resolved, we still have a fundamental problem of government borrowing and spending that needs to be addressed quickly.

The egregious behavior of our nation's leaders must stop.

Both parties are at fault, and it is now time to move beyond petty Republican vs. Democrat politics. This country is in serious peril, and we have no real leaders who will take responsibility and lead this country out of this mess. Instead of gutting Social Security, Medicare and veterans funding, cutting congressional salaries might be a good place to start.

Until that happens, if it ever does, I'll just live by the core values I was raised with and count the days until I'm old enough to run for Congress, if it even still exists.

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