

Living with Excellence

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When I was a young girl, I remember my mom telling me, 'there are no short cuts in life' and 'do the job the best you can no matter how simple.' Those words have stuck with me. As I grew into adulthood and I started to have jobs that I was tempted to slack at (to fit the current status quo), I would hear that pop back into my head. It became such a habit that I really never thought about doing things half-assed. There is a lot of talk about living with excellence in the business and 'self-help' world, and it got me thinking about the positives and negatives associated with this type of lifestyle.

I worked full time in an auto parts store for a couple of years, and there was a lot of downtime between deliveries where everyone sat on the computer and surfed the internet. I could have easily settled into 'the way things are,' but I have a hard time wasting time. So, I found a textbook under the counter about how cars work. I spent the next couple weeks reading all about the marvels of the internal combustion engine and how transmissions work (exciting, I know), but I learned a lot and was able to help customers find the parts they needed. I had no interest in learning this, but it made me better at my job, and I was able to help so many more people. I made myself irreplaceable. When you do your job to the best of your abilities, you become invaluable.

Now doing a job with excellence pours over into many areas of life. I used to complain about having to go to Walmart. Then one day I asked myself, 'how I can shop with excellence?' I smiled at everyone, offered small-talk and helped anyone I could. I left feeling like I might have made someones' day brighter and feeling much better about having to shop there.

I also strive for excellence when doing my chores and riding. I have found that if I do chores intending to do them the best I can, they are so much more enjoyable. I thought I was a good rider, but then I wanted to be the best I could be and so I took some lessons and decided to improve my communication with my horses. What a difference that made! I now finish my rides...happy! Isn't this why we ride anyway? I have also started making meals with excellence. Yes, I make the food I eat the best I can. It is way easier to make a box of mac and cheese (which I do love) than a healthy meal, but I feel so much better when I spend a little more time making and eating an excellent meal. With all this talk about how excellent life can be, what could possibly be negative about living this way? Well, there are several things to be on the lookout for. When I became a better employee at the parts store, some people hated that I worked harder than them because I made them look bad.