

When I was young, I remember walking through a grocery store with my mother. We were preparing to check out, when I spotted an aisle of five-cent candies. I don't remember what kind, but I took several candies and put them in my pocket. When my mother and I arrived home, I began eating the candy. She asked me where it came from, and I recall stuttering, trying to think of an excuse. But I was too late. I had been caught. My mother made me take the candy back to the store and apologize to the manager, and I received punishments from my parents as well. This was the first of many lessons about the consequences of my actions that I learned on my way to adulthood.

Learning the consequences of one's actions is the ultimate way to free one's self. If a person understands the consequences of his actions, he has total control over the outcome of his decisions. And control over the outcome of decisions yields control over the future. When you can control your own future, you are free.

Accepting responsibility for your own actions is one of the most difficult humans learn as children. We make mistakes, and then we make the same mistakes again. As humans, we are programmed to learn from our mistakes. But as adolescents, it doesn't always work that way.

It is impossible to learn to take responsibility for your own actions without first experiencing pain and loss from your own actions. This is the natural way of things; for someone to learn that they should not break the speed limit, they must get a ticket. The ticket results in a fine, and the person who originally made the decision to speed now must experience the loss of money that comes with paying the fine.

Now that this person knows the result of speeding, he or she is free from worrying about paying fines, assuming that he or she really did learn from that mistake. The person also

learned to take responsibility for his or her actions: the action was breaking the law, and the responsibility was paying the fine. In this example, the person learns a lesson, and (hopefully) develops safer driving habits.

The biggest reason to accept responsibility for one's actions is obvious. If you don't take responsibility and deal with the consequences of your actions, who else will? Dealing with one's own problems is a huge step toward adulthood, and it can start with something as trivial as a five-cent toffee.