

Difficult Challenges and Self Control



Send him mail.

“One Improved Unit” is an original bi-weekly column appearing every other Monday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by the founder and editor Skyler J. Collins. Archived columns can be found here. OIU-only RSS feed available here.

The last year has been, and continues to be, my greatest challenge. Increasing activity in my church, learning economics, and committing to the fight for liberty over the last 9 years were easy in comparison to the challenges I’ve faced this year. Those were all mostly intellectual endeavors. I got interested in various things, and followed the logic. Deciding to officially “keep the commandments” was easy because I was already keeping them. My church encourages (and for some privileges requires) abstaining from alcohol and tobacco consumption. I wasn’t in the habit of either. I’ve had challenges with sin, and still do (don’t we all?), but for the most part my choosing to have faith in God was no difficult thing. Likewise, my learning economics and the philosophy of liberty were a matter of choice, of choosing to go where they were taking me. I wasn’t a thief or a murderer, so adopting the non-aggression principle was also a relatively easy thing to do. But this last year I’ve committed to raising my kids in peace. This is where my greatest challenge lies.

Self Control

This quote that I want to share has been attributed to Rose Wilder Lane,

Freedom is neither license nor anarchy: It does not mean chaos or the use of tooth and nail. Freedom does not give any man or group the right to steal, to use fraud or aggressive force or threats of same to get what one wants. Freedom is the right of a man to choose how he controls himself, so long as he respects the equal rights of every other individual to control and plan his own life. In short, it means self-control, and self-government, no more, no less.

When your 7-year-old gets emotional and is yelling at his cousin because he wants his

action figure back (he gave it to his cousin to play with for an indefinite period of time), it's easy to lose control of yourself, as I did a few days ago, and get into a shouting match, shortly escalating to physical blows. No, I did not hit my son, but he did hit me, and in self-defense I laid hands on him to keep him at arm's length. I failed, and failed terribly. After repenting of my indiscretion and making things right with my son, I realized that had I approached him and his cousins in a spirit of playfulness, I could have distracted him from his toy and turned the heat into a nice few minutes of wrestling. We then could have worked out the situation with his action figure. Instead, after our violent spat, I took his cousins, who were by now crying in fear, home for the day.

This was not my only challenge over the holiday weekend. I had others, though this was the severest. All in all, I've learned a great deal about my weaknesses; about how much freedom I, and my son, really have. If I can't control my emotions and actions, why should I expect him to? If I am to teach him self control, I must first master it.

Final Thoughts

As I move forward in my endeavor to improve myself, I must remember not to beat myself up too much when I fail. I'm very good at that. I have to remind my wife, when she gets upset with me for how I've handled my kids, that no matter what she says, I'm already a few steps ahead of her. I'm very self critical, but I've learned to control it very well. I need that control to infect that rest of my mind. I need to learn to stay calm in a torrent of adolescent emotions. I need to get a tight grip around the shouting and the violence that is deep inside me (having been raised on both), and rip it out. I believe I can do it. I *must* do it.