

Rory Scholarship Essay

By

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April 16, 1981, was a day that robbed me of a grandfather. It was on this day that my grandfather, William Henry Hodges, was killed in a car accident caused by a drunk driver. He was killed because someone made a bad decision to drink and drive. This one careless decision took my grandfather's life and was the cause of suffering for his family and friends. This drunk driver has etched himself into my family's history. When I think about my grandfather, it reminds me that other people's choices, good or bad, *can* affect my life. I am reminded that I should strive to make good decisions to keep myself and others safe. If one wrong choice can cost a person's life, it is important to make smart decisions for myself and my community.

As we enter into our teenage years, we are often faced with choices influenced by peer pressure. Peer pressure is when your classmates or friends encourage you to do something wrong or harmful that you would otherwise not do. Peers may make the wrong choices appealing and saying "no" could be challenging. Saying "no" when someone says, "Have a beer. Everyone is having one." or "Try this. It will make you feel better." could save your life or that of another. I think that people succumb to peer pressure because they are afraid of other people's judgments about them. If it is considered "uncool," to do the right thing or follow the rules, people give in to peer pressure.

Good decisions can be hard to make because temptation can be overpowering. For example, during the school day students can be tempted to cheat on tests, copy homework, or abuse technology. Making wise choices each day helps decision-making

skills. Studying for tests, being prepared for class, and trying your best each day, leads you on the path to making good decisions in the future. Making good decisions in small matters is a vital step in resisting peer pressure. In tennis, many balls land near the line requiring the player to determine if the ball was in or out. Honestly calling the balls and making smart decisions daily leads to good decision making later on. Making good decisions is like exercising a muscle for sports. Flexing the muscle of good-decision making can prepare you for harder choices as you get older. Conversely, a weak good decision-making muscle leads to lack of preparedness and confidence in confronting hard choices. With each *bad* choice made, it becomes more natural to make wrong decisions. One bad choice leads to another and soon wrong choices will not sound so bad anymore, just natural.

To make wise decisions, you must think through the choices carefully. Some people give in to peer pressure and don't realize how it will affect them or others. They only think about how their preference might make them happier, or look "cool." If you think about how your choices will affect yourself or others, the right choice will be easier to make. After something bad happens, it is too late to realize negative consequences.

As I enter my teenage years, I must remember to make wise choices daily and stay true to myself. I must not let other people's bad decisions affect mine. I must say "no" to peer pressure, alcohol, and drugs in honor of my grandfather, Rory, Adam, and the growing list of people affected by another's poor decision. I must make good decisions as they become more important. I must choose carefully to make the world a better place.