

Ripple Effect

In a society that applauds independence and fulfillment of the desires of self, the notion that our actions have impact in the lives of others is not always well received. This unpopular viewpoint sees realistically, however, that our quest for freedom, independence and no accountability, is a mirage. Our lives, our choices, our actions have impact in the lives of others. We all live in relationship with other people. Some of those people are members of our families, some are friends and others are neighbors and community members. When relationships enter the picture, our actions have consequences for others.

Take, for example, the decision to use drugs. I may choose, because no one can dictate what I can or cannot put in my body, to use drugs. However, this decision impacts far more people than myself. My relationships with my family members may be damaged through lost trust. My work performance may be damaged and employer confidence lost. And who knows how many people in the community have been hurt trafficking the drugs to my door? Although my choice to use drugs may feel like an independent decision (i.e. I can do what I want with body) the ripple effect of the action goes far beyond one individual.

The ripple effect is true for all of our actions, not just the negative ones. Here's another example. If I notice that someone is having a difficult time carrying their groceries to their car I may make a choice to help them out. Because I helped them, there is a skip in their step making them feel generous when a youth club asks them for a donation. That donation goes to help hurricane relief, bringing meals to many of its victims.

All of our actions, good and bad, effect the lives of others. No action is without impact and that impact is felt in our friends, family members, and the community around us. As you consider the person you are in the world, consider how your actions are landing. How do your actions impact the lives of those around you? Is the ripple effect of your actions making positive or negative waves? I have to wonder; if we all took into consideration the many people who would be impacted by a decision, how different might our choices be.

There are a lot of good things about independence and the empowering freedom to make your own decisions, but independence and community are not mutually exclusive. They co-exist somewhere in the midst of understanding how it all comes together.

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