

*Winner for Minot  
Sunrise Club*

## Wise Self-Expression

By: Jacob Scheresky

Minot High

When was the last time you stopped and fully expressed yourself? In today's world we are faced with many pitfalls when it comes to communication. We try to condense monstrous philosophical ideas into 30 second soundbites, or crunch elaborate opinions down into 160 characters or less. Often times the way in which we choose to express ourselves can be misconstrued or twisted out of our intended meaning. When we are trying to elucidate our thoughts, opinions, or feelings, it is extremely important that we are clear in what message we send to other people. By applying the Rotary Four Way Test to our modes of self expression we **can determine if they are acceptable for the public, just ourselves, or an unhealthy way of releasing our emotions all together.**

The first aspect of the Rotary Four Way Test is, "Is it the truth?" Before we release some of our opinions, ideas, thoughts, etc, on to a public platform, we must ask, "Is this true?" Often times when we are passionately speaking about a hot button topic, or just venting to a friend, we say things that aren't necessarily true. I am guilty of this as well. It is important to be able to vent to someone. It lets us get all of our emotions and thoughts out to be analyzed. When we vent, we are trying to understand our own thoughts,-- we don't always immediately recognize the full weight of what we have just said. It is unwise to vent on a public platform, simply for the reason we are only half aware of the full meaning of our statements. When we make a passing comment to ourselves or to our friends it is understood as venting and not taken to heart. But, if we make the same statements online they can be seen as serious opinions. Consequently, rashly uttering

statements to whoever will hear will time and time again throw us in hot water. If we first vent, then formulate our opinions, then speak or post, we have a lesser chance of uttering a regrettable statement.

The second question to the Four-Way test is, "Is it fair to all concerned?" You may ask, "How can self expression be unfair?" The part that fairness plays in self expression is small but pivotal. It is a mindset we have to constantly keep refreshing ourselves with. Our expression has to be fair not only to other people but also to ourselves. When we portray ourselves or someone else in a story, statement, or through form of art, we have to make sure that what we portray is true to our opinions as well as what's really out there. Often times the picture we paint and the reality that exists are staunchly different. I am not trying to speak against artistic licence but I am **speaking against slander and misrepresentation. It is essential to step back and analyze the situation at hand, in hopes that it will let us see new perspectives that garner a fairer representation.**

The third standard of the Four-Way test is, "Will it build goodwill and better friendships?" When we express ourselves, especially in connection with our dealings with others, it is important to ask if it is a productive thing to do. For example, if someone has wronged or hurt us it is necessary to let them know they have committed a transgression against us. Additionally, the extent of the damage they caused is also something they should be aware of. However, it builds no goodwill or better friendships to in return attack the person in the way they attacked us. Another aspect to consider, is whether or not it is appropriate to notify the person of their wrong doing at all. As in if the mistake stems instead from a larger issue. For instance, if someone is short tempered or gruff with you and the previous day a loved one of theirs' died, it

*Scheresky 2*

would be disrespectful to confront them about their gruffness. Instead, we need to recognise times that others' needs to express themselves should be addressed rather than our own.

The fourth and final step of the Four-Way test is, "Will it be beneficial to all concerned?" We have to ask ourselves if our statements, art, or posts are going to build ourselves and the people around us up. It is important to remember that even though we are trying to work out our own problems and sort out our own feelings we still have to be courteous to those who choose to listen to us.

In order to insure that our society is one built around concepts that will work towards our preservation and not our hindrance, we must keep principals such as these in the forefront of our lives. By asking ourselves four simple questions before we speak, post, or write, we can **determine if our self expression truly comes from a desire to better ourselves and those around us. Furthermore, by instituting these ideas in all aspects of our lives we can create healthier relationships, communities, and a better world.**

*Scheresky 3*