

COMPLAINTS

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Last year during lent I gave myself a challenge; I would not eat any sweets. No more of my dad's double chocolate chip brownies that melt in your mouth, no more heavenly marshmallow bunnies that were popping up in stores for the season, and not even French Silk ice cream, which before then had been a daily must-have for me. Throughout those forty days I thought nothing could be harder than watching my friends slurp milk shakes, gobble down cookies, and snack on M'n'Ms while I sat in jealousy. It turns out, though, that I was wrong, and there are much harder sacrifices in life than going without dessert.

This year, instead of giving up a type of food, I decided to give up complaining. It is the most challenging goal I have strived to achieve. Gripping is a habit everyone has in common; I bite my nails, my friends crack their knuckles, and adults go on diets. I can't even begin to count the number of times I've heard people say "I'm so cold," or "I'm so hungry" without even thinking. Try to look back on yesterday. Do you recall any complaints you said without even realizing? Is it only now that you remember saying any of those phrases? Since Lent began, I have caught myself whining to others many times without even knowing. Amazingly, it takes a huge amount of effort to quit.

From this experience I have given myself a new law of life: even when Lent is over and Easter comes, I will stay positive, and no matter what it bothers me, I will not share my negative emotions with others. I believe it is important to look upon life with an optimistic view, so that annoyances will never get in our way. Complaints prevent us from seeing the positive side of life and realizing that no matter how bad a situation is, we can find good in anything. Trust me, I know.

I babysit two small boys, ages three and seven, who were both diagnosed with muscular dystrophy. More than likely they will not live past age 35! I watch them run around their house with scrawny little legs, and I cannot help but think of how they will be ten years from now. No one has it worse than those two children, and I cannot imagine how their parents must feel knowing that the future of their children looks dim. The remarkable part of this whole situation, though, is that everyone in the family has an extremely positive attitude. The kids act as if nothing is wrong, and jump on couches and play Spiderman just like any child would. They have loads of energy during every hour of the day, whether it is nine in the morning or ten at night. The parents sign them up for violin and piano lessons even though their skills may be lost in the future. They give their kids the same opportunities other children receive, so that for the time being, life will feel relaxed. Not once have I heard them complain.

Now whenever I am having a bad day and I feel the need to let out my negative emotions, I think about the times I have spent babysitting this family. If muscular dystrophy will not get in their way, how can I possibly complain about the little issues in life?