



The IKE Disease

Your Name Is Tracy

Roger D. Casterline

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by
Roger D. Casterline



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Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction | 1 |
| The IKE Disease | 2 |
| Fantasy vs. Reality | 5 |
| Knowledge About Life | 12 |
| Best Source of Information | 15 |
| Worst Source of Information | 18 |
| Identifying a Bad Relationship | 19 |
| Boy–Girl Relationships | 22 |
| Parents Have Feelings | 27 |
| Using Your Gift for Work | 29 |
| Obedience | 37 |
| A Prayer for Tracy | 42 |

The IKE Disease

Your Name is Tracy

Introduction

I recently retired as a high school guidance counselor. Over the years, I used “The Ike Disease” as a topic in group counseling. The information was always well received by the students, so I decided to put the message in print, making it available to others. Of course in the school setting, I was counseling a group of students. In my book, I am working one on one with the reader. It should be noted that numerous books have been written for parents, teachers, etc. in an effort to help young people attain success. The IKE Disease is different in that it encourages youngsters to do something for themselves. Every student that encounters success will at some point in time get down to business and take responsibility for their life. I pray that your heart will be open to my instruction so that your life will soar to the very heights of success and happiness.

The IKE Disease

I would like to make this book an individual counseling session between me and you, the reader. For this purpose, I've added a subtitle to the book: *Your Name is Tracy*. I use the name Tracy because it can identify either a boy or a girl. So in an effort to make our session more realistic, please consider your name to be Tracy. It also helps me as I write, because I can refer to you with a familiar name instead of referring to you as "you" throughout the book. I want you to feel a "counselor/counselee" relationship, and allowing me to call you Tracy will help with that. Of course, we are role playing; however, I believe this technique will provide a relaxed, comfortable atmosphere for you to receive important information for your life.

Now let's get down to business. You have just walked into my office and you state, "I want to know about life." You asked the question, so sit up straight, get rid of your gum, and pay attention. The first thing you must know is that you have a dreaded disease. The name of the disease is IKE. Don't feel you are alone, because the IKE disease is plaguing teenagers without exception, and if you think you do not have the disease, you are in worse shape than I thought. The IKE disease cripples, it causes rebellion, it causes great unhappiness, and in its worse state, it can even cause death.

The letters *I*, *K*, and *E* are initials for three words. Do you know what the words are, Tracy? Make some guesses before reading on. If you get it right, the healing power of wisdom is beginning to set in. The initials stand for the words, “I Know Everything.”

“Hey, I’m a teenager; don’t you tell me what to do! Parents, I know what’s best for me; I don’t need your counsel anymore. Teachers, you’re not my parents, so don’t act like it; quit trying to tell me what to do. I know what’s best for me, and I want people to leave me alone and let me live my own life. I KNOW EVERYTHING.”

Tracy, I know teenagers have the aforementioned thoughts. You know how I know? Because I was a teenager at one time, and I had the IKE disease big time. These thoughts are symptoms of a teenager’s condition. If the “IKE Thoughts” are acted out, your life will become a disaster. Have you ever heard adults say, “If I only knew then what I know now”? Well, Tracy, “*THEN*” for you is now. Don’t let IKE lead you down the path of making wrong choices for your life. I know of hundreds of young people who have followed IKE and today are paying a horrible price.

With many diseases, there is a virus involved, and the IKE disease is no exception. The name of the virus responsible for the IKE disease is the INDA virus. Can you imagine what the INDA virus might be? Like IKE, *I*, *N*, *D*, and *A* represent words. Here goes. INDA stands for “I’ve Never Done Anything.”

The reason you have the IKE disease is because *you have never done anything*. By that, I mean you have never owned a home, you have never raised a child, and you've never paid a utility bill or purchased food and clothing for a family. You see, Tracy, you have never been responsible for anyone except yourself, and as soon as you become responsible for others, the first thing that will become very apparent is that *you don't know everything*.

Every year at my school, the seniors go crazy the second semester just before graduation. All of a sudden, they would be full of themselves, cocky and, in some cases, downright belligerent. I call it "The Rite of IKE." It even happened to kids who had been perfect ladies and gentlemen throughout their high school career. However, without fail, the following year, when those same graduates would come back to visit school it was, "Yes, sir," and "Yes, ma'am." They were polite and kind, without a trace of the arrogance they had displayed prior to graduation, totally different people. Well, Tracy, what do you think happened to produce this change in such a short period of time? After graduation, they went from "*I've never done anything*" to "*I've done something*." For the first time, they were on their own, and they began to take responsibility for themselves. You see, Tracy, when a young person begins to understand *they do not know everything*, that realization begins a process leading to a responsible, productive life.

Fantasy vs. Reality

Tracy, you pretty much live in a fantasy world. Since you haven't had an opportunity to experience life yourself, you gain life experiences through movies, television, music, books, etc. These media outlets often dictate the way you act, the clothes you wear, the way you talk, and the way you wear your hair, and more. For the most part, it is harmless; however, on occasion it can become disastrous. I recall a few years ago there was a movie about three teenage boys who were out on the town one night having fun. In the film, the boys pulled a prank by lying down in the middle of a busy street, laughing their heads off as cars went flying by. After the movie came out, kids tried the same stunt in real life, with deadly results. The point I want to make, Tracy, is that when a young person meets life's realities, it can be pretty rough if they haven't made a distinction between fantasy and reality along the way.

In my first counseling job, I was very enthusiastic. I was going to change the world; I was out to make positive change in all of my students. In this effort, I started a group counseling session which included twelve boys, all high school age. I selected the boys based on two criteria. First, they were bad students with poor grades, discipline problems, and on a first-name basis with the discipline office. The second criterion was that they had good potential to

be excellent students if they wanted to. They were, indeed, classic underachievers. The fantasy they were living in was that they were tough guys and I'll refer to them as "Tough Guys" from now on. They had the IKE disease like you would not believe. The Tough Guys liked to fight in the cafeteria, and anywhere else, if anyone wanted to challenge their toughness. They thought their teachers were jerks and their parents were out of touch. Nobody was going to tell them what to do. They were fast with the girls, and "I'll knock you out if you look at me wrong" kind of guys.

Back in those days, every student had a study hall. Your parents might remember such a class. It was a period each day when a student had time to do homework or to prepare for tests. The Tough Guys never used their study time for anything useful, so I assigned them to the same study hall, but instead of going to study hall, they came to me for group counseling. It was a hoot. Every Monday morning they would begin class telling tales about their weekend. All their stories were Tough Guy stories about drinking beer and being with the ladies. I noticed that, as one Tough Guy was telling his tale, the others were barely listening as they were thinking of a story that would top the other guy's story. We had guest speakers, went on field trips, I gave lectures myself, and we had round table discussions. We elected officers and conducted class in a business-like manner. They even came up with a rule

to fine each other ten cents if they didn't raise their hand before speaking in class. The Tough Guys decided to save the money so the class could eat out together at a nice restaurant at the end of the school year. Believe me, Tracy, at ten cents a pop for a full semester, we had plenty of money saved up to eat out.

One of the field trips was a visit to the state prison, and I could tell that, as we were driving to the prison, the Tough Guys were getting a little nervous. They covered up their anxiety with Tough Guy talk about what they'd do if an inmate gave them any trouble. Upon arrival at the prison, we had to pass through a security check, after which a correctional officer escorted us to the main cellblock. The cellblock was rectangular in design. In the center of the cellblock was a large cement area surrounded by three levels of individual cells. We entered the cellblock through a large metal door which closed with a BANG, and, at this point, we were right under the second level of cells. It was like the tomb door had been shut and we were on the inside. The correctional officer directed us to a door at the far end of the cellblock, which meant we had to walk the entire length of the cellblock. The inmates were all in their cells, and knew we were coming to visit. As we began our walk, we heard catcalls, whistles, and shouts from the inmates. The inmates hurled intense vulgarity and threats directed at us. There was profanity I have never heard before. The way

they put together cuss words was almost poetic. The further we traveled down the cellblock, the louder the noise became, until the comments became undistinguishable. I turned to look at the Tough Guys; they were walking with heads down, and not a word was spoken. They were actually walking so close together they were stepping on each other. Believe me, Tracy, we were all a little shaken by the welcome we received from the inmates.

When we reached the door at the end of the cellblock, the noise died down and the Tough Guys started being cocky again, making Tough Guy comments. The correctional officer opened the door and led us into a classroom which housed the Tough Guys' worst nightmare. In one corner of the room stood twelve inmates, one inmate for each boy. There was a white line at the front of the room and one of the inmates shouted to the boys, "Get on that line, suckers." What do you think the Tough Guys did, Tracy? Well, they got on the line, and they just didn't walk to the line, they hustled to the line. Once on the line, the inmates lined up in front of the boys, one inmate for each boy. The inmates didn't say a word, but simply stared at the boys until all lowered their heads to the floor. Have you ever heard the phrase "stared down," Tracy? This was the mother of all stare-downs. After the boys' heads were down, each inmate, one at a time, took his turn talking to the boy who was in front of him.

The inmates had different topics, all relating to what would happen to the boys if they ever ended up in prison, and they didn't spare words or volume of voice in making their point. Now, what do you suppose those Tough Guys did while being lectured by the inmates? That's right, Tracy, they cried: tears-on-floor-crying. You see, these young boys were in a fantasy world when it came to being a Tough Guy, and when they met the reality of being a Tough Guy, the inmates, they cried like babies. We all have fantasies, Tracy, but when we take the *wrong* steps through our fantasies and then come head to head with reality, it can make us cry. I have a lot of fond memories of the Tough Guys. I probably learned more from them than they learned from me. I loved the Tough Guys.

Another example of Fantasy vs. Reality occurs every January and February in high schools throughout America, when most college acceptance letters are received. The event can bring great joy or great sorrow, depending on the steps students take to bring their fantasy to a successful meeting with reality.

I got to know Bobby as a freshman, and from the beginning he made it known that he planned to attend the University of Florida after graduation. Bobby's circle of friends also wanted to be Florida Gators, and they spent time talking about living together, fraternities, etc. Bobby had excellent academic ability; however, he did not produce the

fruits of his capabilities in his first two years in high school. In meeting with Bobby, I would explain to him that his grades did not meet Florida's requirements for acceptance. Bobby always indicated that he would improve and that he would one day be a Gator.

You know, Tracy, I have a theory that high school life is like a pie that is divided into three equal parts. The first piece of the pie is your family, and working hard on the academics. The second piece is being involved in school activities, and the third piece of the pie is having a full social life (going to parties and hanging out with friends). However, for a student to be successful in living their fantasy, like going to a good university, they must eat the first piece of pie (family and academics) and then chose to eat either the second or third piece of pie (activities or social life). Eating all three pieces will make your life sick, and lead to failure.

As I observed Bobby's life in high school, I could see that he had chosen to eat the second and third pieces of the pie (activities and social life). As a result, Bobby's fantasy met reality one gloomy day in February when Florida notified Bobby that he was not accepted to the University. He cried like a baby, which is what a number of students did in that same situation, because they had chosen the wrong steps in bringing their fantasy to reality. There is nothing wrong with fantasy, Tracy. We all go through fantasy in our lives; however, if our fantasy is of real

importance, we must take the proper steps to bring it to reality. Failure to do so will produce great anguish and, “crying like a baby.”

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