

## **Rights and responsibilities**

Written by Konstantin Balashov

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### **Why bother?**

Have rights is cool. Be responsible for something is not that exciting. In the Perfect World, is it a good idea to have all the rights and no responsibilities? Well, not really, and I will explain why shortly.

But first, lets clarify what the rights and responsibilities exactly are.

Rights are a privilege to make decisions. Responsibility is liability for these decisions, and obligation to compensate negative consequences.

Therefore, if one has fewer rights than responsibilities, he is responsible for consequences of decisions he did not make. That is definitely not good and shall be avoided. If this is part of your working conditions, and you cannot change it, you better quit.

If one has more rights than responsibilities, that sounds cool. The problem is - responsibility provides the main criteria for the good decision-making. When one makes mess, and someone else cleans it up, the loop back is no longer closed, and the one who makes mess get disconnected from reality. Spoiled kid's demands become unrealistic. Uncontrolled official issues horrible decrees - you can see it quite often in countries with oppressed media.

As John Emerich Edward Dalberg Acton once said, "Power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely". There is no way to overcome this problem with self-improvement, meditation, or some other techniques. It is just not possible to effectively control anything long term without a feedback.

**Let's summarize:**

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1. Watch out for your rights and responsibilities and make sure they are in balance. Do not sign up (and do not let others to put on your shoulders) responsibilities for the decisions you cannot make. On the other hand, when you get the right to make a decision, assume full responsibility for the consequences.

2. When you delegate right to make some decision, make sure you delegate responsibilities too, at least the most part of it. Reward structure for the key decision making employees must reflect the consequences of their decisions. It usually does not impact most of employees, cause only few make key decisions.

On the other hand, if somebody asks for making decision you are in charge of, let him, if he agrees and is capable of being responsible for. Otherwise reserve decision for yourself. This rule helps me a lot with my kids. Decision is usually "whether we do it or not" and responsibility is usually "who will be cleaning up the mess afterwards".

3. When everyone's rights and responsibilities are in balance, it is clear, that everyone (and no one else) is responsible for his own faults, and there is no reason to blame others. Balance leads to harmony.

### **Breaking the balance**

When someone learns how to ride the bike, first he learns how to keep balance, but cannot control where he goes. To control the ride, i.e., to make turns, he needs to learn how to quickly get out of balance, turn, and then catch the balance again.

Same thing applies to rights and responsibilities. If you want to move up with your career, or in some public affairs, just take more responsibilities, then request the respective rights, i.e. request power to make respective decisions. If you want to downshift, first pass decision making to someone else. Short-term misbalance of rights and responsibilities is usually Ok, just make sure you are not get stuck in the unbalanced state.

### **How does it apply to our life?**

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At work, you are responsible to your manager, and, perhaps, in some degree to colleagues and clients, if they depended on you. Outside of your job, you are responsible to yourself, and, perhaps, in some degree to your parents. But your main responsibility is to the kids you have or going to have. You make a lot of decisions for them. Please make sure their best interest is the main criteria.

For example, it is wrong to marry someone your parents insist on, if you feel that this person is not a good match for you. It is wrong, because the responsibility is mostly on you and your kids. Imagine yourself coming to your parents many years later and telling them: "Ok, you insisted, I obeyed, here are the consequences, my life is broken, how do you compensate it?" And, let's say, your parents will be barely alive by then, or barely hear and understand you. Even if they will be Ok, they still cannot give you back wasted years of your life. I have seen some critical decisions made not just because parents insisted, but also because parents' colleagues at work, or neighbors said so. If you understand rights and responsibilities balance concept, you can avoid those disastrous tragedies in your life.

Here is another example. Why are you should not drink or smoke or take drugs? Is it because your parents told you so? That's surely not the main reason. And, after all, they cannot watch you all the time anyways. Should you stay away of the bad stuff for your own sake? Sure, but here is a catch. I saw people saying: that's ok, it is my life, and no one else business, and I can take responsibility for it when time will come. Of course, when time will come, they will be different (life teaches us, and time changes us). They will regret and repent, but still they can insist, that it is their own business. However, when their handicapped kids come to them and tell: "You my parents did wrong things and now I'm disabled, and I cannot do things other kids can, would you please fix that?" - and of course there is no way to fix it, because it is too late, that will be the moment of truth, point of taking responsibility for the bad decisions. Some young people told me: "Well, I'm just not gonna make kids, that's it". It does not work. As I said, everyone changes. In ten years you can change you mind. And your kids will come to you and demand the answers, and answer "it was my own business" just would not work. Even if they will shy to come and ask, but still be handicaped, will it make you feel better?

## **What to do now**

When someone does not want to make a decision, someone else does it for her. It happens when she is afraid of responsibilities, afraid of life. The problem is - you cannot hide away from your life. No matter whether you made your life-related decisions yourself, or someone else did

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it for you; you are still in charge for the consequences. You cannot afford not to make decisions, so you got to take control over your life. And, of course, admit, that you and only you is responsible for your life.

Please don't tell me "I cannot tell how the life will go". It is completely up to you to steer it in the right direction. Plan and prioritize it to have healthy, smart and happy kids with both parents and love in a family. And, of course, be happy yourself.