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October 2025

Check Us Out!

Playing the Long Game

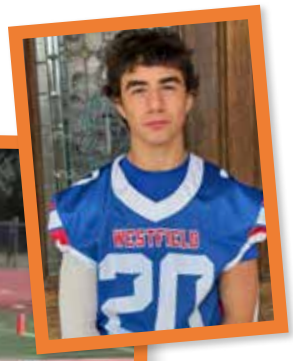
Lessons in Risk and Reward

As October settles in, the rhythm of fall feels more established. School routines are familiar, weekends are packed with games, and the crisp air reminds us that change is in full swing. For me, this season of transition brought a lesson from the sidelines of my son's football game, a reminder that life is full of choices about when to take risks and when to play it safe.

My son Sean's eighth-grade tackle football team had poured themselves into preparation, giving up four weeks of summer to practice five days a week. Their effort was obvious in their season opener. Against a tough opponent, they battled to a 0-0 tie with just 12 seconds left in the half. The ball was pinned at their own 5-yard line. I figured the coach would run out the clock and be happy with his team's excellent defensive effort in the first half. Instead, he called a timeout. I turned to my wife and said, "This can only end badly." Sure enough, he went for a passing play. The ball was intercepted and run back for a touchdown. My son's team eventually lost 14-7, and the difference was that one choice.

Watching it unfold, I realized the lesson wasn't about football. It was about life. Every day, we face decisions that balance risk and reward. Do we stay in our comfort zone, or push ourselves into something new? Do we wait for the safe moment, or do we step up with courage? Risks are not inherently bad. In fact, they are often the path to growth, progress, and opportunity. But like a coach's playbook, they need to be calculated, not careless.

This fall, many of us are weighing similar choices. Maybe you're encouraging your child to take on more independence. Maybe you're deciding whether to save, invest, or make a big purchase before the holidays. Or maybe, it's as simple as how you respond to another driver on the road. In each case, the way we measure risk and reward shapes not just the outcome, but who we become.



Here are three practical ways to make wiser choices:

1. ***Pause before acting.*** Take a moment to ask: What do I stand to gain, and what might I lose? That brief reflection can shift a rash reaction into a thoughtful decision.
2. ***Plan for "what if."*** Even the best choices can go sideways. Having a backup plan, whether it's for your financial, professional, or personal life, makes risks less daunting.
3. ***Match the risk to the reward.*** Save your boldest moves for the opportunities that matter most. Not every moment calls for a Hail Mary.

Fall is a season of harvest, a time of reaping what we have sown and preparing for the winter ahead. It is also a time to check in with ourselves. Are the risks we are taking aligned with our values? Are they helping us grow, or just making noise on the field?

As my son's game reminded me, sometimes we win, sometimes we stumble, but the key is learning to weigh our decisions with wisdom. Growth comes when we step out of our comfort zone, but the best progress comes from taking thoughtful risks. Here's to a season of courageous choices that help us grow at home, on the field, and in all the moments that matter most.

-Brian O'Connor

RECEIVERS AND RHAPSODIES

The Birth of Streaming Sound

We celebrate the late Steve Jobs of Apple and Spotify CEO Daniel Ek as innovators in the world of music streaming, but the *true* pioneer of how most of us enjoy tunes in 2025 is a man who died nearly a century ago.

A lawyer by trade, Thaddeus Cahill (1867–1934) spent his free time as an innovator, a hobby that eventually led him to revolutionize sound. In 1897, he received a patent for the Telharmonium, a *200-ton organ* created to turn telephones into what could be considered the world's first iPods. Looking more like a NASA control board than a musical instrument, the Telharmonium used electromagnetic impulses to create sounds similar to those of modern synthesizers and transmit them over telephone networks, essentially making the "hold music" of its time. Although bulky, the invention captured the hearts of music aficionados, including Mark Twain, who famously said, "I couldn't possibly leave the world until I have heard this again and again."

The instrument made its public debut in 1906 with the opening of Telharmonic Hall in New York City. Guests could grab one of the phone receivers placed throughout the venue and listen to the synthesized music Telharmonium operators were performing on the floor below. Soon, phone users embraced Cahill's technology at theaters, eateries, hotels, and homes nationwide.

Unfortunately, the system proved glitchy, the organ's electronic tones interrupted ordinary phone users mid-conversation, and AT&T decided not to invest in Cahill's impractical invention to expand its reach. That inconvenience, coupled with high manufacturing costs (each Telharmonium cost $200,000, a fortune then) and operational demands (it required 2–4 musicians to play), eventually led to declining popularity and the closing of Telharmonic Hall by 1920.

Sadly, no surviving audio recordings of the Telharmonium are believed to exist, and its last known version was dismantled and scrapped in the early 1960s.

Surprising Southern Halloween Laws

Clergy, Candy, and Criminal Codes

Depending on where you live, Halloween is either a holiday for spooky fun or a one-way ticket to the wrong side of the law. Surprisingly, certain parts of the country have Halloween-related laws regulating everything from who can wear a mask to whom you're allowed to make laugh. Here are a few obscure-but-true laws in the South that, if broken, are scarier than any haunted hayride.

The Great Mustachioed Priest Menace

If you're a Halloween reveler in Alabama, be careful with your costume choice; God and the law are watching. Dressing up like a priest, rabbi, nun, or other clergy member on Oct. 31 or any other day of the year could cost you a fine of up to $500 or up to a year behind bars. The law was established to show respect to religious institutions by discouraging citizens from impersonating faith leaders.

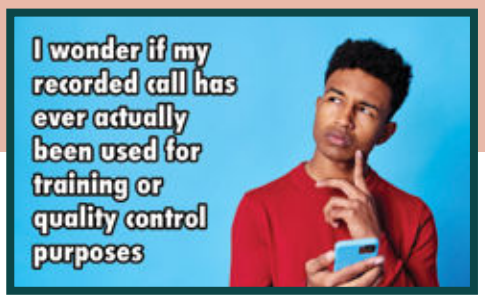
Additionally, Alabama's focus on maintaining a sense of decorum in religious practices extends to what citizens do in the presence of *actual* priests. Naturally, disrupting services by prompting attendees to burst out laughing is bad form, which is why the state prohibits anyone from wearing a fake mustache in church to elicit a chuckle. Was this practice *really* widespread enough to inspire an actual law? While the law's historical origins are unclear, it demonstrates the state's commitment to religious faith and willingness to fine anyone who attempts to mock it.

The Decriminalized Children of Dublin

Dublin, Georgia, has an odd, and, depending on your age, *totally fun*, legal perspective concerning facial coverings. Although the city's rules were loosened temporarily at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, municipal laws prohibit people from "wearing a mask, hood, or other apparel or regalia in such manner as to conceal [their] identity, or in such manner that [their] face is not fully visible, or

in such manner that [they] may not be recognized." However, Dublin makes an annual exception for children under the age of 16 who "may be garbed in the usual or customary children's Halloween costumes." While parents or older siblings will face a misdemeanor charge if they're caught wearing a mask while accompanying their little ones trick-or-treating, at least children in Dublin won't be deemed juvenile criminals for covering their faces while on the hunt for neighborhood candy.

TAKE A *BREAK*



In a black-and-white world, Danes embrace the gray.

The University of Oxford's "World Happiness Report" cites Denmark as the second-happiest country behind Finland. Denmark clearly knows a thing or two about fostering a culture that prioritizes contentment and personal well-being. Not surprisingly, the rest of the world often looks to Denmark for inspiration to lead a more positive life. Regarding parenting, Danish citizens have crafted a philosophical and practical approach that could benefit children in countries far from their own.

Attitude Determines Attitude

First and foremost, Danish parenting is a practice steeped in empathy, caring, communication, and respect. While these core tenets aren't particularly revolutionary, parent-child relationships in Denmark thrive because of how they apply each. Stringently nonviolent, Danish parenting focuses on the inherent goodness in all children and encourages independence, optimism, and honesty. For example, parents eschew "helicopter parenting" to allow their children to engage in playtime and other activities with as little intervention as possible. Practitioners believe granting their little ones this high level of freedom enables them to develop greater self-esteem and leadership skills than if they constantly dictate their actions and give strict directions. Additionally, Danish parenting stresses the importance of validating a child's emotions instead of telling them *how* to feel. This ongoing encouragement to embrace and examine feelings likely enables Danish children to develop stronger self-trust and a clearer perception of the world around them.

Bad Patches and Damaging Praise

Naturally, plenty of old-fashioned tough love balances the openness apparent in Danish parenting. Parents rarely shy away from addressing negative events, feelings, and circumstances head-on with their children. Suppose a Danish parent is having a rough day or is upset about unexpected bad news. In that case, they're more likely to explain to their children *why* their disposition is darker than usual rather than bottling up these thoughts and shielding the little ones from reality.

While talking things out is the norm in Denmark, overloading children with compliments is considered bad form. For example, studies suggest that constantly praising a child's intelligence harms their self-worth when they encounter mentally challenging tasks later in life. Instead of working through these obstacles, they're more likely to give up in frustration. To that end, Danish parents emphasize *effort* over *accomplishment*, helping children gain greater confidence in overcoming hurdles.

APPLE UPSIDE-DOWN CAKE

Inspired by IHeartEating.com

Ingredients

Topping
- 1/4 cup unsalted butter
- 1/2 cup light brown sugar
- 3 Honeycrisp apples

Cake
- 1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 1 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 3/4 cup milk
- 1/4 cup unsalted butter, melted
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 large egg

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 F.
2. In a 9-inch round cake pan, add butter for topping. Place in oven for a few minutes until melted.
3. Sprinkle brown sugar over melted butter.
4. Cut apples into half circles about 1/4-inch thick (no need to peel) and arrange them in circles, overlapping slightly until they fill the entire pan. Set aside.
5. In a large bowl, whisk together flour, sugar, baking powder, ground cinnamon, and salt.
6. Add milk, melted butter, vanilla, and egg. Whisk until combined.
7. Pour batter over apple slices, smoothing as needed.
8. Bake for 30–35 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.
9. Let cool to room temperature, invert on a plate, and serve.

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HALFTIME HEAT

Hype, Hits, and a High-Stakes Lawsuit

"I wanna make a move. I wanna play their favorite song, but you know they love to sue."

These were the words rap superstar Kendrick Lamar used during his halftime performance at this year's Super Bowl to introduce his song "Not Like Us." Although he may have intended it to be a joke, his words proved prophetic.

Of course, the "they" referenced in Lamar's intro was fellow rapper Drake, with whom he'd been engaged in a high-profile feud resulting in "diss tracks" and fiery public statements. Although rap battles are nothing new, the late 1990s murders of the Notorious B.I.G. and Tupac Shakur are widely rumored to have been linked to their public conflict, the Lamar/Drake schism reached epic proportions during the February sporting event, playing out in front of a global audience of more than 130 million. Most incendiary of all, "Not Like Us" features lyrics suggesting that Drake, who has sold more than 500 million units in his musical career, has a sexual interest in minors.

Lamar's performance of the track exacerbated an already contentious defamation suit Drake filed in January against Lamar's record label, UMG Recordings, which, interestingly, also oversees *the plaintiff's* music catalog. In an amended complaint filed shortly after the Super Bowl, Drake alleges that Lamar "duped" the audience into believing he had immoral proclivities.

"It was the first, and will hopefully be the last, Super Bowl halftime show orchestrated to assassinate the character of another artist," the suit adds.

Faced with a major lawsuit filed by one of its artists, UMG quickly issued a public statement, voicing dismay over Drake's legal maneuverings in recent months.

"Drake, unquestionably one of the world's most accomplished artists and with whom we've enjoyed a 16-year successful relationship, is being misled by his legal representatives into taking one absurd legal step after another."

While the ultimate conclusion of Drake's latest move in his longstanding feud with his musical arch nemesis was unknown at the time of this writing, what *is* clear is that combining a bruised ego with big money often leads to interesting times for the legal world.

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