

# Do What You Say You Are Going To Do



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Jeff spent a high-school semester in Madrid when he was 16 and I stayed with him there for his first week. Jeff had the supreme confidence of his age and he was eager to see me off at the airport on 9/11. I saw the video of the World Trade Towers crashing to the ground in the arrival area at Schiphol airport in Amsterdam, where I had intended to connect to a flight home. The world had changed and Jeff and I were both stranded far from home. Technically we didn't even have a home at that time, having sold the one and declined the other transaction in Laguna. Jeff was going to be in Madrid for 4 months and I was spending that time with Mary in Denver. I took my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday self-portrait with my cell phone camera in the Amsterdam Hilton and Jeff kept a stiff upper lip in Madrid for a while. He had a hard time later. Jeff was depressed and that was hard for me too. You are only as happy as your least happy child.

We ran up a monumental phone bill and considered the possibility of bringing Jeff home early. I left it up to him but I recommended that he stick it out. If he came home early, that would be engraved in his brain as a failure and he was at a critical stage in his development as the confident, competent, and reliable young man that he is today. He said he was going to stay and make it work, and he did that. Jeff got straight A's in his college-level courses and his Spanish is fluent today. In this case it was important for Jeff to do what he said he was going to do because it was an important thing he said he was going to do, and because he was serious when he said he was going to do it.

Of course, we can't be expected to do everything that we speculate about doing in conversation, or even everything that we express a casual intention to do. That standard would be too severe and it would inhibit speculation and brainstorming. But when we make a serious commitment we should have a way of highlighting that fact and then following through as though our integrity and effectiveness depended on it, which they do. Call me.

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