Center for Leadership & Educational Equity

“Passing On” Good Advice

Adapted from the Iowa Peace institute.

“Don’t go into Mr. McGregor’s garden: your father had an accident there; he was put into a pie by Mrs. McGregor.” — Advice given to Peter Rabbit by his mother in *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, 1902, by Beatrix Potter

“I always pass on good advice. It’s the only thing to do with it. It is never any use to oneself.” — Oscar Wilde, *An Ideal Husband*, 1895

Peter Rabbit had about as much respect for “good advice” as Oscar Wilde’s character in *An Ideal Husband*. We know from the unfolding of the tale that the naughty rabbit, upon receiving this advice from his mother, headed straight for the forbidden garden and barely came away with his life.

There’s a lesson for all of us who may be tempted to give good, but unsolicited, advice: resist the urge! Even when there’s a great deal at stake, most of us prefer to reach our own conclusions. What’s required is to have the necessary information and the opportunity to make a decision. We develop trust in our own capacity to make decisions to the extent that we’ve been allowed to judge for ourselves whether our choices have been wise and when we would like to have help.

Maybe as we meet together we can become more aware of those moments when we think we know the best choice for someone else’s situation, and we feel an inclination to share that. We could resist, instead, and ask for their own thoughts about the situation.

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