

Joseph's Litter-ally Life-Changing Lesson

By 50

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"Gosh, I'm coming! I'm coming!" yelled Joseph, whilst changing into his school uniform. "I'm just looking for my books!"

After searching for what seemed like an age, Joseph found his books and made his way downstairs. Upon entering the kitchen, he was enticed by the smell of pancakes and blueberries.

"Come on," explained Mum, who was washing the dishes. "You've got ten minutes otherwise your father's leaving without you. Get a move on!"

Wolfing down his breakfast, Joseph kissed his mother goodbye and stroked his cats. He slammed the door on his way out and sprinted towards his father's car, a black Bentley parked on the road outside.

"Cutting it close, aren't you?" sighed Dad, turning the keys in the ignition. "Where am I dropping you off? The roundabout?"

"Yes, please," replied Joseph. "I'm meeting Bob and Jeff there - we'll walk to school together."

As his father's car drove smoothly down the road, Joseph spotted his best friends - Bob and Jeff. Jeff was wearing a grey blazer and black trousers whilst Bob was eating a tuna sandwich.

"What's up guys?" said Joseph. "How's it going?"

"Hey, Joseph," said Jeff. "Have you remembered your Science homework?"

"Of course he hasn't!" laughed Bob. "C'mon, you know what he's like!"

Joseph heaved his heavy legs out of the car, and trudged slowly towards his friends.

"Right you three," said Dad, leaning out of the driver's side window. "See you later."

"See you after school," replied Joseph, and with that, Dad sped off down the road to work.

“Wow, my Dad is so embarrassing,” muttered Joseph, whilst shaking his head. “C’mon you two - let’s head off to school and I still need to finish off my Science homework. If I don’t get it done, then Mrs Loser will eat my lunch.”

Joseph, Jeff and Bob all made their way towards Stevenson Alley School, rushing through the loud, busy crowds of people. They saw Johnson the caretaker and Miss Panther (one of the Assistant Heads) waiting outside. Just then, Joseph remembered that he had completely forgotten about his Science homework. Pausing to catch his breath, he rummaged through his bag, pushing aside his water bottle before finding his task scrunched up into a ball at the bottom. He took it out, held it in front of his face, and tried to un-scrunch it as best he could. As he did this, he noticed something horrifying in front of him. His eyes popped out, his mouth opened and he dropped his task. The front of the school was covered in colossal piles of litter, such as plastic bottles, cans and takeaway containers. Lots of the children were having to avoid flying pieces of rubbish as they made their way into the school building - one poor child was hit by a drinks can that had been blow by the wind.

“Whoa, when has this been such a problem?” Joseph asked himself, putting his homework slowly back into his bag. “I know litter is a big issue down Hamilton Road, but this is crazy. Hey, Jeff, Bob, come here for a sec!”

Jeff and Bob made their way over to Joseph, a puzzled expression on both of their faces.

“What’s up?” Jeff and Bob asked in unison.

“Take a look,” replied Joseph, pointing in the direction of the rubbish. “Look at all of the plastic bags and shattered glass. It’s horrifying.”

“Ahhh, it’s been like that for ages,” Bob said nonchalantly. “I don’t know what it is lately, but there seems to be a lot more rubbish on the streets at the moment. Jeff and I are used to it.”

“Used to it? How can you be used to it?” exclaimed Joseph, staring open-mouthed.

“Blimey, calm down,” answered Bob, a little surprised by Joseph’s reaction. “There’s no need to be that upset. And besides, we’re only kids. It’s for the grown ups to sort out.”

Joseph stood there in utter shock. How could they be so careless?

Noticing that Joseph was completely distracted, Bob pulled him away from the entrance and the three of them headed off into the building.

For the rest of the day, Joseph couldn’t concentrate. He couldn’t get the image of the mountains of rubbish out of his head. He had taken someone else packed lunch box, had gone to the wrong classroom for Science and also he bumped into someone.

“Come on, Joseph!” said Jeff, shaking him by the shoulders. “I know it’s not great but you need to snap out of it. If you’re not careful, you might trip and end up hurting yourself!”

“Jeff’s right - you can’t spend all day worrying about it,” Bob sighed sadly. “It’s not like there’s anything you can do about it anyway.”

But Joseph couldn't ‘snap out of it’. It wasn’t a simple as that. That image of the shattered glass remained in his head for the rest of the day, even on the walk home. He wanted to do something but he had no idea what to do. Was Bob right? Was there really nothing he could do?

As Joseph approached the wooden, expensive door of his house, he turned the key in the keyhole, and made his way in. Mum and Dad were sat in the living room, eyes fixated on the television, which was showing the latest news report.

“Hi honey,” Mum murmured, glancing at Joseph. “How was school?”

But Joseph was too distracted to respond. Instead, he threw himself onto the sofa and began staring at the screen.

“In the latest news, a local primary school in north Yorkshire has made headlines today after launching their own litter-picking campaign. Their campaign not only involves picking up litter in the local area, but encouraging the local community to reduce their waste and to urge the council to provide more rubbish bins in the local area.”

“Dad? Does anything like that happen around here?” Joseph asked, looking sheepishly at his father.

“Around here? Nah, I don’t think people round here think litter is a big deal to be honest with you,” murmured her father, eyes still locked on the screen.

“Well, isn’t there something we could do? Who would I need to speak to?” Joseph questioned.

“The council usually makes decision on things like that. Don’t get your hopes up though - they still haven’t responded to my complaint about the waterway pollution. It’s been five years now!” Dad groaned.

Suddenly, Joseph’s eyes lit up. He had had an idea! Would it really work? Was it a little crazy?

Later that evening, Joseph began drafting a letter to the council and to his headteacher. He had written about five drafts! Each time, he’d shown the letter to his Dad, who kept on suggesting long, complex words. Each time, he went back to his room, determined to write the perfect letter. He mentioned things like the piles of rubbish outside his school and the problems it was causing, and even included photos of the shattered glass and all of the

plastic bags that were floating around. He made sure that he ended his letter with a lovely rhetorical question: how could you (the council) be so careless? Hopefully, that did the trick! If not, then he might have to think about leading a protest outside the school gates!

The very next morning, Joseph woke up feeling energised and optimistic. He had actually managed to get up before Mum could start shouting him! With a feeling of success, Joseph got dressed for school (he managed to find a clean pair of socks in his bed), hurried down the stairs and burst into the kitchen, where a bowl of cereal and a cup of delicious, boiling tea was already waiting for him.

“Wow, you’re up early,” Mum uttered. “Is everything alright? Are you feeling OK?”

“Yep, I’m fine! It’s just that I’m in a rush to get to school!” explained Joseph with a mouthful of tea.

“Ah, right,” replied Mum, who was now making his lunch. “Well, fingers crossed it works! That rubbish has been awful recently!”

As soon as Joseph had finished his breakfast, he rushed out of the house, dashed down the road in the direction of the nearest letterbox and carefully placed it into the slot. Hopefully, the council would take this matter seriously and the headteacher might help! He made his way off to school, with a sense of hope.

It had been a few weeks now, and still nothing from the council. In fact, the headteacher still hadn’t replied either. Joseph was beginning to feel utterly disappointed. Whenever the postman arrived, Joseph would hurry down the stairs (almost treading on poor Jack the cat a few times) in a mad rush to grab the post, but each time, he was left disappointed.

“C’mon Joseph,” said Jeff whilst on the way to school. “It’s only been a few weeks. And besides, like I said, you’re only a kid. What makes you think the council are going to listen?”

“Ahhh, maybe you’re right,” replied Joseph, a disappointed look appearing on his face. “I guess I just thought that I could make a change.”

“Come on, let’s get to school. Remember, it’s double Maths today - we’ve got a test!” Bob exclaimed, rubbing his hands together gleefully. “I adore tests!”

“Was that meant to cheer me up?” asked Joseph. “Coz it definitely didn’t. Anyway, c’mon - let’s go.”

As the three youths made their way along Hazelwood Road, Joseph noticed that things seemed a little tidier today along the roads. Where were all of the mountainous piles of rubbish? Coming around the corner, Joseph couldn’t believe his eyes. Something unbelievable had happened!

There was a team of people, wearing fluorescent orange jackets with the council emblem emblazoned on the backs, putting out brand new sets of bins! That wasn't the only surprise! Mr Roberts, the headteacher, was waiting outside the school gates, supervising the council workers.

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"Ah, Joseph. I've been expecting you," explained Mr Roberts, wearing a terrifying smile with his arms folded neatly across his chest.

"Urm, sir, what's going on?" Joseph asked, bemused by the situation.

"Well, I received your letter two weeks ago. It's taken some time and some persuasion on my part, but we've managed to convince the council to do something about the barbaric litter problem in the area," clarified Mr Roberts. "I do apologise for not responding sooner - it's been slightly chaotic trying to get through to someone at the council."

Joseph stood there in disbelief. His idea had worked!

"Oh, and that's not all. Our school has been chosen by the council to start a campaign aimed at promoting reducing, reusing and recycling in the local area. They were very insistent on getting the children involved, and I think you would be the ideal candidate to lead it. What do you say?" asked Mr Roberts eagerly.

Jeff and bob stared at Joseph - both of them were absolutely gobsmacked, stunned and amazed.

"That sounds great Mr Roberts" replied Joseph, barely able to contain his smile. "I'll get started right away!"

As Mr Roberts walked away back towards the council workers, the three children celebrated Joseph's achievement.

"I can't believe your letter actually worked!" bellowed Jeff. "I can't believe it!"

It had worked. It took a little while, but it had worked. Joseph had done it. He'd proved that if you are determined enough, one person can make a difference.