

# Cause or Effect?

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Life is a game of chess.

It is a game of chess within a game of chess. Much like a Russian doll - with an infinite number of chess games built into each other. Each game you play is but a move on the larger chessboard. That game, in turn, is just a single move somewhere even bigger.

My study of chess over the years, my experience in playing games, and ultimately my successes in tournaments, have given me critical lessons I have been able to apply in life; leading to victories far sweeter than anything achieved on a practice board. My greatest achievement of all time is my 2-year-old son.

To play the game of Life without the lessons from many thousands of chess games would be like trying to play chess without having learned the rules or played a game. Challenging.

## You Are Responsible

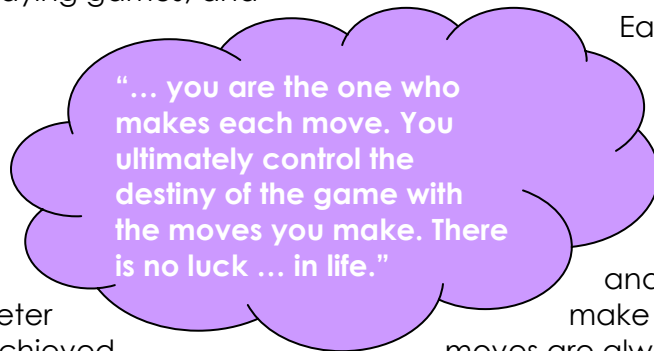
I believe everything in life is your responsibility. Everything is caused by either your actions or in-actions.

Everything.

I do not apportion blame or imply fault, just accept that there are

consequences and I should hold myself accountable for everything in my life, good or bad.

Just as when you play a game of chess you are the one who determines the move you play, in your life you are the one who makes each move. You ultimately control the destiny of the game with the moves you make. There is no luck in chess or in life.



Each move you make has an effect on other people. Each move causes your opponent to think, to react and to themselves make a move. Their

moves are always influenced by yours.

## Responsibility Is Learned

This belief in responsibility is not innate. It is the natural state of good mental health, but it has to be learned and experienced to be truly understood and believed.

Children, in particular, have trouble accepting responsibility for their actions or considering consequences before making a move. Playing ball in the house; a window gets broken – “it was an accident” or “he threw it” – rather than accepting there are consequences for every action. I don’t suggest blaming the child, or punishing them, but rather teaching

that they are responsible for everything, that they create every situation in their lives. This is a powerful concept.

### In Control, Or Out?

The notion of responsibility comes with the idea of control. If you believe that you control your life, your fate and you create your world by virtue of your actions, or in-actions, then you can take full responsibility. You become the cause of the world you live in.

If you are out of control, an effect of the world, then everything appears to be pre-destined, chaotic and responsibility lies 'out there'.

Young people often live experiences indicating lack of control. A twig on the river of life, tossed around with no control over their destiny. Why do they feel like this?

A young person experiences very limited control over their own life. Teachers at school tell them what to do, set boundaries, rules and physical restraints. The bell goes; time to eat - but nobody asked if I was hungry!

Parents too, give curfews and rules. Young people have no financial freedom and limited geographic mobility. They have very little decision making power or control over their own life.

On and on it goes. For the first 14-18 years of life most experience the world as a place in which they are being affected by everyone and everything around them. Few find

they have an impact on, or cause the world to change.

No matter what you say, experiences are always more powerful lessons than words.

### How To Gain Control

The cause is powerlessness, the effect is a negative feeling.

What options do they have to change this:

a) Change the effect, persuade yourself the cause is right and the emotional response is wrong.

b) Change the cause – become more powerful

Those who don't enjoy the emotions can 'escape'. Teenagers abuse drugs and alcohol because they want to 'escape' these emotions. Their solution is to artificially induce the feeling that they don't care – often articulated with the phrase 'losing our inhibitions'. The loss of



inhibitions makes the fact that you aren't in control of your actions real, and the emotion changes. You don't care that this is the case.

Inhibitions are necessary; they prevent dangerous (to self and others) activities and behaviour which further lessens self-esteem. How often have you heard... "I did that, but I was drunk" or "I beat that person up, but I was drunk". The actions are no longer personal, they 'didn't care' at the time (or later) because there was no control of mental and physical faculties.

Many think this is wonderful! Why so great? Because this is an attempt at something broader, something more

enormous – they are looking at their lives, feeling powerless and small, they are at cause in the world, everything happens to them, nothing happens because of them. They try to accept this is 'just the way it is' and tell themselves the reaction is wrong – that the powerlessness is correct, but their emotions are wrong. So hide from the feeling that they don't enjoy.

### Rebelling

Alternatively, is it surprising that in seeking some form of control – some way of feeling more powerful (more at cause) that many choose to 'rebel'. What is that really?

It is the cry that "We don't like not being in control, we don't like being at cause in the world and you can't make me!" Sound familiar? You can't MAKE ME!

What is graffiti? Theft? Violence? Murder? All crimes start out with the necessity to prove to ones-self that YOU CAN'T MAKE ME. That the world isn't controlling – that the individual has the ability to make a difference to their own lives (natural to think of oneself first, then only later be able to consider the possibility of making a difference to other lives).

### We Do It For You

Obviously all teachers and parents apply rules and regulations with the depth of experience and in the best interest of the child. The side effect we can leave behind is a feeling of loss of control.

We need not just to tell, to say that "YOU CAN DO IT" to build self-esteem, confidence and belief in themselves with words. We need to show it – at the same time teaching that RULES are there for a reason and they cannot be disregarded.

No matter what you say, experiences are always more powerful lessons than words.

Tell your child they CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE and change the world; within the confines of the RULES. Say "YOU can be, do, have and create everything you desire – even within the boundaries set for you."

### Just Like Playing Chess

Just like a game of chess. In chess you have rules which you MUST apply. These are not negotiable. The laws of the game. Yet, within and using those rules you can control the entire world – you are the cause of every move. You choose at every moment what happens, no outside influence, no 'luck' of the dice. Your decision. Your choice. Your RESPONSIBILITY. If you make a bad decision you learn from it and try again. If you make a good decision you get the reward.

This is the analogy. It has all the components necessary and it is a game. It is FUN. Just as life should be.

If every child could play chess, just once a week, and unconsciously learn the lessons of responsibility that the game teaches...imagine the possibilities.

**David Cordover** is CEO of Chess Kids, the world's premier chess business.

Started in Melbourne, Chess Kids has shared the benefits of chess with over 200,000 students and currently work with 647 schools in Australia.

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