

## ~ Right from Wrong ~

*“Things are as they are. Looking out into it the universe at night, we make no comparisons between right and wrong stars, nor between well and badly arranged constellations.”*

– Alan Watts

*“Genuine tragedies in the world are not conflicts between right and wrong. They are conflicts between two rights.”*

– Hebbel

Once upon a time I lived in a small town in Kansas. Next door to us was another small town, which had a hardware store at one end and a Macy’s department store at the other end. It was about a 10 minute drive between the two. I did something that day that seemed to run against all my Sunday School training. I lied.

What did I lie about? I told my parents I was going to the hardware store when, in fact, I went to Macy’s. What was I doing at Macy’s? Enjoying the perfume and makeup counters in the women’s section of the store. After all, boys, especially teenage boys, were never supposed to be hanging out in the women’s section. It would be the kiss of death for a boy to be “caught” there. Worse than the idea of being caught being effeminate or not doing “guy things” is the simple fact that I lied to my parents where I would be and what I would be doing.

There are many reasons one can come up with for justifying the lie. I feared for my safety, which was absolutely true. I feared punishment and humiliation. I believed there was no one I could trust. Ah, but the best laid plans often come unraveled...

As I stood at the perfume and makeup counter admiring the items, a grandmother was descending the escalator with her grandson. He could not have been more than two years old. As they exited the escalator the little boy fell down. The escalator grabbed his right pants leg and

started dragging him back to the escalator and into the grate. The grandmother cried out.

And there I was -- in the right place at the right time. No one else was within 20 feet. I was right there. Without thinking, I ran over to the escalator, wrapped my arms around the little boy and pulled him as hard as I could away from the machine that was about to mangle his leg. The pants ripped and his shoe came off. The child and I fell backward onto the floor. The escalator “ate” his shoe and the portion of his pants that had ripped away. It was only another moment, I thought, and it could have been him too.

The grandmother thanked me and wanted my name. She wanted to tell the local paper and my parents. I must have become white as a sheet. I told her something like, “No, no. That’s fine.” I quickly disappeared and left the store, getting home as fast as I could. I felt so ashamed, and yet knew I did something good too.

How is all this possible? How is it possible that I did something dishonest and yet ended up in the right place at the right time? One can make many excuses about fear of being punished or worse, but it does not mitigate that I lied for my benefit. And what is interesting is that my lie allowed me to help a child who was in danger.

While I doubt I shall ever understand all of the morality at play here, this I know: even when we do something “wrong,” the opportunity for “right” is always present. It was not wrong to like makeup or perfume. It was not wrong to be at Macy’s. And it was not wrong to help the child. And it was not right to lie. But good, it seems, is always a possibility even when our decisions are not always “right.”

- Helen Hill

# ~POINTS OF VIEWS~

Helen Hill, MA, MFT Intern (IMF #48896)  
Supervised by Cheryl Grant, MA, MFT (Lic #35887)

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## Help in Time of Need

**Suicide/Crisis Intervention**  
213-381-5111

**Teen Suicide Crisis**

800-852-8336

310-855-4673 (6pm-10pm)

**Domestic Violence Hotline**

800-799-7233

**Battering / Rape Hotline**

310-392-8381 (24 hour)

**Elder / Dependent Abuse Hotline**  
800-992-1660

**Child Abuse Hotline**

800-540-4000

**Daniel Freeman PET Team**

310-742-8650 or 310-823-7928

**Psychiatric Emergency Team**

310-618-9687

800-854-7771 (after hours)

**LA Free Clinic (Ages 12-24)**

6043 Hollywood Blvd

Los Angeles, CA 90028

323-462-4158

**LA Free Clinic**

8405 Beverly Blvd

Los Angeles, CA 90048

323-653-0950

**Alcoholics Anonymous**

310-474-7339

## HOW TO ARRANGE TO HAVE HELEN SPEAK OR PERFORM A WORKSHOP



### Please provide the following information:

1. Your name and job title/responsibility
2. Site name: business, educational institution, health care, or other. Please be specific.
3. Address and telephone number.
4. Best time of day to contact you.
5. Your name and job title/responsibility

**Helen E. Hill, MA, MFT Intern**  
**2211 Corinth Avenue**  
**Suite 203**  
**Los Angeles, CA 90064**  
**Telephone: (310) 779-7795**  
Email: [info@helen-hill.com](mailto:info@helen-hill.com)

Non-profit/Agency fee: \$150 per session

Private / For-Profit fee: \$500 per session