

Tic Tac Dealer

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Getting someone to do, think or believe in a certain way - was, is, and will remain an art. Children are among the most persuasive human beings, especially in front of their parents. I am convinced of this because I was once an expert in this field. As an only child, my family's attention was always on me. This comes with both advantages and disadvantages, but the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages.

Going to school is one of the most unpleasant activities for most children and it was the same for me. On the first day of school, I cried like a baby. The whole "first grade thing" seemed like a nightmare, but things became more and more "sweet." At home, I wasn't really allowed to eat sweets, but after a lot of persuasion and some begging on my knees, I had my first small victory in this art of convincing. My mother and I had made a deal: apart from the sandwich I had for lunch, every day, on the way to school, I could choose any snack from the store. This made the first few weeks of school more pleasant, as I was excited about having the power to choose what I ate. Also, this small change helped me make friends more easily, as I was the kind of kid who liked to share the food she had.

Time passed quickly, and the holiday season came: the month of December. In Romania, Saint Nicholas Day is the first major event. On December 6th, he brings the best snacks to the children who have been obedient and who have carefully cleaned their boots the night before. On the other hand, naughty children only get a stick. In the happy cases, when I didn't receive a stick, I got more fruits: tangerines, clementines (*I never knew the difference between them*), or caramels. This year, however, I wanted to receive more than that. So, I asked myself: *How can I get more sweets this year?* The first part of my plan was to be very good for at least two weeks before the big event. My new behavior was noticed by the whole family who kept wondering about me. The second step consisted in a hard-worked letter, full of prayers to Saint Nicholas. Everything seemed to be going perfectly until (probably after reading the letter) my mother asked me, "Why do you want to receive so many sweets?" *I did not expect this simple question.* Panicked from head to toe, with wide eyes and a trembling voice, I answered, "To share them with my classmates." *I hope she believed me*, was my first thought after this discussion. *I will find out in a week*, I told myself.

On the eve of the holiday, I cleaned my shoes more carefully than in other years and waited impatiently to see if my plan worked or not. I almost didn't sleep that night. I quickly got out of bed at every noise. Like every year, I tried to see Saint Nicholas, but this time, there was more at stake. The morning came and...I found the shoes full of sweets and especially with 5 boxes of tic tac (what I wanted the most). I was on top of the world! All the work had paid off!

School started, and the kid who usually shared the best part of the food, had a revelation: *Why not sell these things?* Thus began my first and only business. With the supplies from St. Nicholas and the daily sweets, I was ready. During the long break, I announced that the store was open. The first day was the hardest because no one understood what was happening, not even me. I was completely in a fog.

After a few weeks, things took care of themselves: during the 10-minute break, after the teacher left the class, I called my classmates through an announcement: "The store is open!" I had clear rules and prices that I followed with the same seriousness with which my mother treated the "subject of sweets": I did not accept exchanges, and a tic tac pill would cost 50 cents, while other products could have higher prices. The first few days did not go good; 6-year-olds don't have pocket money. But my products and the way I promoted them by saying, "They are the best," convinced them. Soon, queues formed at my desk, and everything went unexpectedly well. Probably, the idea of limiting sugar consumption among children was fashionable in Romania at that time, so when they saw that they could enjoy a little freedom, people flocked for the sweets I brought. Children from other classes also came. It was crazy!

As we all know, all good things come to an end. The store prospered in a way that would have made Jeff Bezos jealous. But, one day, my mother cleaned out my backpack and found a lot of coins. "Where is this money coming from?" she asked. I started to tell her the truth, how I had started the store, how children used to come and give me money for a tic tac pill, candy, or a biscuit; absolutely everything. As you are all aware: "Pretty much all the honest truth-telling in the world is done by children." My mother was very calm when she found out. I think she was holding back from laughing while I was crying like a storm, thinking I was in trouble. It wasn't the case. Very calmly and with a warm smile, she explained how, for some of those children, that money was probably all they had to buy lunch. Also, she suggested that we close the shop for the moment and reopen it when I grow up. This time, I was the one convinced. The shop was closed forever, but it remained an honourable memory.

Looking back, I can only be amused. An idea that came out of nowhere, had such a big impact in my life. Not only did I develop my "entrepreneurial spirit" (*if there is such a thing in a 6-year-old child*), but for the first time I knew what I wanted and I knew how I could get it. Also, the way my mother reacted will always be an example for me. She is the real expert in persuasion, the one from whom I learned everything when I grew up. I can't wait to have such adventures with my own children and see how they will try to corrupt me.