Do Not Follow the Crowd

Haleh Rasaei

**BEFORE YOU READ:** In your experience, when has it made sense to follow the crowd? And when has it not made sense?

I have never been more stupid in my life than the day I first used public transportation.

In 2010, I went to Tehran, the capital of Iran, to study in a university. The city I grew up in was small, so I did not have any experience with subways. When I arrived in Tehran, I walked to the subway station, but I did not know what to do. Where could I find the train?

Did I need to buy a ticket before I got on the train? If I needed to buy a ticket, where could I buy it? I did not want people to know this was my first time riding a subway, so I decided to do what other people were doing. If I had known what would happen to me when I just followed the group without thinking, I definitely would have changed my mind.

I saw people were running. I did not know why they were in a hurry, but I followed them. They were running, so I was running too. Sometimes I ran faster than others and overtook them.

While I was running, I noticed signs on the walls. Some of the signs were just advertising and some signs were about train directions, but I did not pay attention to them. After a moment, I reached a crossroads.

I stopped and thought a little bit and watched the group. Some of them were going to the right side and others to the left. I did not know what I should do. I decided to go the left side. I noticed that there were ticket scanner machines. People touched their wallets to the scanner, and the bars opened. It was crazy because I did not know what exactly was making the bars open. There were a lot of passengers, and they were going fast. It was my turn. I touched my wallet to the scanner, but nothing happened. The bars stayed closed. I tried again, but it did not work. Then I realized I did not have an E-ticket in my wallet. That was why the bars did not open for me.

I turned back, and decided to try going the right way. While I was going to the right, I saw...
the queue to buy tickets. I stopped, and I bought a ticket. I followed the group again, and this time I made it past the scanner machines. After the scanner machines, there were a lot of stairs, and I was running down the stairs as fast as I could. I arrived on the platform, but the train was leaving. I could not catch up. While I was waiting for another train to come, I saw a sign. I decided to read the sign. The sign showed me which train goes to which location. This time, I was lucky, because the train that I had missed was not the correct one.

While I waited for the train that I needed to take, I thought, “I will never forget this crazy experience.” I told myself: “Do not follow everybody when you do not know the reason for their actions.” In my opinion, it would be better for me if I had asked somebody for directions or read the signs that were on the walls. From now on, I hope to ask questions when I do not know something.

Haleh Raseal, from Iran, is a student at Portland Community College in Oregon. She studied psychology in her country, and she would like to continue her studies in the U.S. She loves to help people with her knowledge.

**AFTER YOU READ:**

1) Underline the text a) where the author explains why she followed the crowd, and b) where she finally stops following the crowd.

2) At the beginning of the story, Haleh makes a decision to follow others. At the end of the story, she uses her mind in a different way. She reads the signs. Write about a time your thinking shifted and you used your mind in a different way.

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