

# Reserving Judgment Embers

**Theme:** Lessons on reserving judgment learned through the medium of a story.

**Age of campers:** 10+

**Time allotted/actual:** 20-30 minutes

**Location:** Anywhere quiet and comfortable.

**Props/Materials/Symbols:** Access to the Chinese parable written out below.

**Prep done:** Read up on the story in advance and be familiar with it. It is short, so very easy to learn and tell from memory. Be sure that you have some thoughts and insights in mind before engaging.

**Opening/Mood set:** Tell the story below to the campers. Feel free to embellish as you like, or even add more developments that you make up.

*A man who lived in an ancient village tended his lands and farm every day with a single horse the same way all of his neighbors did. One day his horse ran away. His neighbors all came over later to console him. To them he said "I don't know if this is a good thing or a bad thing, we will see." A few days later his horse returned to the house with five wild stallions following it, which then became the property of the old man. He now had 6 horses. His neighbors all came over later to congratulate him. To them he said "I don't know if this is a good thing or a bad thing, we will see." A few days later his son was riding one of the wild stallions, and in its lack of training, it spooked and threw him off, breaking his leg. The old man's neighbors all came over later to console him. To them he said "I don't know if this is a good thing or a bad thing, we will see." A few days later, the Chinese Army came through the villages recruiting all males capable of fighting in the Great War. Many of those who went to this war died in battle shortly thereafter. When they got to the old man's house, they passed his son over because he was injured and unfit for battle. Later, the old man's neighbors came over to congratulate him. To them he said "I don't know if this is a good thing or a bad thing, we will see..." A few days later the War ended in favor of China, and all who were recruited were given medals of honor, national renown, and generous support from the spoils. The old man's son was not among those honored. Later, the old man's neighbors came over to console him. To them he said "I don't know if this is a good thing or a bad thing, we will see..."*

**Questions/Activities:** The story can go on, or stop whenever the teller feels like it is time to end. The part above is often enough to get the core concept of the story across.

**1<sup>st</sup> activity:** Once the story is presented, a discussion can begin about how and why things are evaluated as "good" or "bad" in our lives and what that means.

**2<sup>nd</sup> activity:** Challenge the campers then to come up with instances in their own lives where things may have seemed negative but turned out in their favor, or things may have seemed good at first but turned out not so well.

**Closing:** If it applies, ask the campers if there are any situations in their lives that they may not have made up their minds about. If not, are there any that you might consider *changing* your mind about?

**Were other people involved?** None needed.

**Thoughts on pacing?** This is, after all, a story embers. In some instances the campers are more interested in sharing their own knowledge of stories in the same vein--short snippets that have a salient moral. If this happens, facilitate and transition as you see fit.

**What would you change next time / what did you learn / how would you enhance it?** In addition to having thoughts and insights about the story itself, be sure that you have your own examples in mind to share as well. This will make it easier to quickly participate on that level without having to think of an appropriate story in seconds flat.

**Camper feedback:** Cool story!