

# Security manager 'took toy without paying for it'

A FORMER Tesco security manager was awarded €18,000 after he was fired for taking a toy from one of its shops without paying for it.

Although an Employment Appeals Tribunal found Tesco's decision to dismiss Alan McNally was reasonable, it said a delay of seven months in dealing with an appeal against his dismissal was 'unacceptable'. Mr McNally had a heart attack during this time.

The tribunal heard the former security manager had been interested in buying a VTech toy, which he left in a security office to be bought at a later date.

Giving evidence, a security officer said he had noticed that the toy had been removed from the office a few days later and checked CCTV footage, which showed Mr McNally taking it from

By **Darragh McDonagh**

the shop. Mr McNally said he had taken the toy home to check if it was suitable for his child. He also said he had removed it to keep it safe - as items that had been left in the office for purchase had been taken before.

He said he had always intended to pay for it and he hadn't tried to hide it - either when taking it home or bringing it back to the shop a few days later.

The security officer reported the incident, and an investigation got under way that led to Mr McNally's dismissal for breaching Tesco's staff-purchase and honesty policies on April 22, 2014.

The tribunal heard that Mr McNally wrote to Tesco three times to request an appeal of

the decision - setting out ten grounds - but he got no response. In the absence of a reply, his solicitor wrote to Tesco on June 6, 2014. But a response was issued directly to Mr McNally, as Tesco refused to engage with his solicitor. At this point, Mr McNally suffered a heart attack.

The EAT found that Mr McNally's actions had been against company policy, and noted that his role as security manager was to police this policy. It also noted that he accepted that what he had done was wrong.

The EAT said the compensation arising from the dismissal would have amounted to some €65,000, but it had to consider the extent to which the loss was attributable to Mr McNally's conduct. It was satisfied that €18,000 was fair.

# Dr Mark Dooley



## MORAL MATTERS

# Laughter is key to having compassion

**W**E do it so often every day, and yet we rarely think about the meaning of laughter. Like weeping, it is something that expresses deep human emotion. It is a physical act, but one that is the sound of the soul.

We laugh when we are happy, when we meet people and when we see something comical.

We laugh to express our approval, to make others feel at ease and to lighten the mood. We laugh at jokes, in times of excitement and, sometimes, for no reason at all.

Evil also expresses itself with a laugh. Think of the villain who responds to despair with laughter. The menacing snigger of the crime lord is synonymous with agony and devastation.

Mostly, however, our laughter is a spontaneous reaction to moments of love, humour and a shared sense of fun. It is our way of telling others that life is good and that relief from worry is but a laugh away. It is the voice of joy that speaks without words.

Where there is no laughter there is only pain.

When we cannot laugh we have succumbed to misery, to a life without levity. That is why laughter is a great symbol of light, a sign that the darkness has lifted.

Was there laughter in Auschwitz, in the Gulags or in the benighted 'paradise' of Pol Pot? There was certainly the cruel cackle of those who would torture their victims. But was there laughter of the kind that transcends the horror and lets the light shine?

Wherever there is goodness there is also laughter. Even in the midst of agony, there will be those who smile and give us reason to laugh in spite of everything. Without such laughter, there is no hope but merely endless night. We all need to laugh even when we would rather cry. We all need to dispel the clouds of grief with that hymn of joy. We need to let the spirit of love soar in laughter.

And when it soars we should start by laughing at ourselves. Those who cannot laugh at themselves are a threat to everyone. Hitler, I imagine, did not laugh in response to Charlie Chaplin's impression of the dictator.

Isis responds to laughter with the gun. The Turkish president imprisons those who innocently poke fun at him. Zealots and fundamentalists don't get jokes unless they are at someone else's expense.

A leader who refuses to tolerate self-deprecating humour, or who can't make light of his own shortcomings, is a danger to freedom. This does not mean that we should purposely mock other people or their beliefs. It is simply that those who cannot see the

funny side of life will always perceive laughter as something offensive.

There is nothing noble in laughing at another person. There is, however, something virtuous in laughing at oneself. It is a sign that we have come to terms with our faults and failings, that we have learned not to take ourselves too seriously.

In laughing at yourself, you will find it easier to be compassionate. You will look at others, not judgmentally, but with empathy. You will do so because, having reconciled with your own flaws, you will not condemn others for theirs.

The closer we edge to 'perfection', the less inclined we are to laugh. It is then that we judge others by our own impossible standards. And when they fail to meet those standards, the look of love hardens to one of condemnation.

None of us like to be laughed at, but there is something cathartic in being able to laugh at the way others perceive you. I remember the first time I witnessed someone impersonating me. It was only when I found myself crying with laughter that I realised how far from perfection I am.

To see humour in everything is the best way to let the light in. Of course, we must know when it is appropriate to laugh, when it is fitting to joke or have fun. By learning how to laugh at oneself, you will instinctively know when to smile, weep or express love in silent affection.

Compassion begins with laughter and ends in love. We laugh at ourselves and, in doing so, we see others with similar quirks, burdens and afflictions. And then we smile with sympathy, caring rather than condemning.

**T**O laugh at oneself is the source of mercy in a sensitive soul. We will only ignore pain when we fail to see the pain within ourselves. When we seal over the cracks with the mask of self-righteousness, we become immune to the suffering of others.

We laugh because we are beings who can see the funny side of life. We are at our best when we can look in the mirror and smile, not with vain satisfaction, but with comic relief. After all, it is our foibles that make us human and enable us to love others for who they are.

So let us begin this year by laughing out loud - laughing at everything which causes us to smile.

Let it be for us a sign that we are truly alive and ready to live in the light. Let it be for us a sign that we don't take ourselves too seriously and that we can see beyond our imperfections to the beauty which lies on the other side.

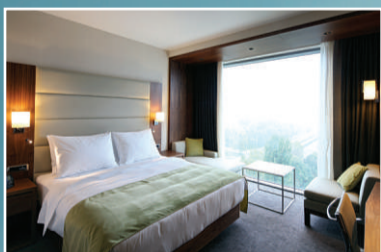
Let it be for us a symbol of love and compassion in a world where, all too often, the heartless are left with the last laugh.

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