

Shoplifter sued sports shop after being caught

AN 'experienced shoplifter' has lost a €75,000 damages claim for defamation against a sport shop where he was allegedly caught removing a security tag from a Manchester United top.

Derek Kenna claimed he was doing his Christmas shopping in November 2014 at JD Sports on Henry Street in Dublin when he was stopped by a staff member who accused him of having a de-tagger device for removing security tags.

Kenna, 40 - who has 13 previous theft-related convictions - said he had been with his son, who has Down Syndrome, and was concerned the boy was alone in the shop while he was being 'physically mishandled

By Saurya Cherfi

and falsely imprisoned' by security guards.

Conor Kearney, counsel for JD Sports, told Dublin Circuit Civil Court that the store denied Kenna's allegations.

He said the store was certain that Kenna, Ave Maria Road, Maryland, Dublin, had been trying to remove the tag.

The court heard that JD Sports staff member Adam Crawford had seen Kenna leaning and de-tagging the jersey.

Mr Justice Raymond Groarke heard Kenna was arrested two months before the incident after he de-tagged an item in another JD Sports shop.

He had pleaded guilty to shoplifting two soccer jerseys and had received a community service sentence.

Pointing to his 13 previous convictions, Mr Kearney told Kenna: 'You are claiming in these proceedings that your reputation has been damaged, but I'm putting to you that, as someone who was engaged in a series of thefts and de-tagging incidents, you do not have a reputation to damage.'

Referring to Kenna as an 'experienced shoplifter', Mr Justice Groarke said Kenna was a man whose reputation was in tatters given his record for shoplifting. He made an order for costs against him.

Dr Mark Dooley



MORAL MATTERS

An emotional diet balances body and soul

IT is Lent, a time when Christians are called to conversion. Although 'conversion' is synonymous with religious awakening, it also means a transformation in which we turn ourselves around. We stop, take stock and travel in a new direction.

This need for personal transformation is not unique to religious experience. Every day, we open our newspapers and magazines to find promises of personal renewal. Whether it be exercise programmes, diets or self-discovery seminars, the promise of a new person is just around the corner.

The great miracle of humanity is that each person can, indeed, become a new self. We can all turn around and head for a new horizon. In the fullest sense, the power of conversion is something we each possess.

The dieter desires a new self, one that looks different to the old. In shedding the pounds, we seek to transform our physical appearance. It requires great discipline but the end result is a prize worth fighting for.

And yet, there are many whose physical conversion does not have any impact on their moral or emotional outlook.

The fitness fanatic may be free of stress but still weighed down by his emotional burdens. Very often, we run in order to escape our problems rather than face them.

When someone says: 'I am not the same person I once was', they don't mean that they have changed physically. Physical changes are a daily feature of our condition and are mostly beyond our control. What they mean is that they have experienced an inner transformation.

It is as though the inner person has somehow shed pounds of emotional baggage. The result is that they no longer look at the world in the same way. They have turned away from all their old obsessions, compulsions and worries.

Physically, they may look the very same. Inwardly, however, they are completely different. They have undergone something of an emotional detox, in which lifelong habits have just fallen away.

A good diet and physical fitness will certainly save and enhance your life. But so, too, will this form of emotional diet. I would go so far as to say that you can have neither peace nor joy without it.

What is an emotional diet? To

diet is to fast from unhealthy or unnecessary foods. But what of those emotional toxins that, in their own way, inflict just as much damage?

We give way to gossip, anger and condemnation, and we feel rotten. We criticise people, laugh at their misfortunes and ignore their tragedies. We all binge on that type of junk energy, but at what cost?

I, for example, have a lifelong habit of impersonating people and their funny foibles. When, however, I go too far, my middle son invariably says: 'Now, come on, Dad, you are just being mean now!'

Such emotional purity is, to my eyes, like the blinding light on the road to Damascus.

His intention is not to make me feel bad, but it has forced me to curtail a lifelong habit. It has forced me to turn around and to think before I use my impersonations as a cover for criticism. Like all detox, it requires discipline, but what diet is ever easy?

The effects of physical exercise and restraint are obvious enough. But what are the fruits of a moral and emotional conversion? As the inner self changes, we become more loving, caring, compassionate and gentle.

When words of condemnation rise to our lips, we learn to keep our mouth shut. Bitterness and resentment give way to empathy and understanding. And yes, like all dieters, we regularly fall and fail, but that does not prevent us getting up to begin again.

WE get up, turn around and try even harder. We get up, knowing that we each possess the capacity to become something new and beautiful. We are human beings - people who can change everything about ourselves.

The miracle is that we are never stuck with the same old self. All it takes is some determination and discipline to cleanse the toxins by nourishing the heart.

We might call it an emotional workout that brings balance to body and soul.

And then, one day, you will look in the mirror and see something strange. You will see a reflection of someone smiling, someone who seems happy to be alive.

You will see a person you have never seen before because, for the very first time, they have turned fully around.

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