



The Game Of Life – Chutes and Ladders

by Joe Gandolfo

My youngest son, Duncan, came to me one morning and asked if I wanted to play. Being a part-time stay-at-home Dad mixed with the responsibility of growing a company, I was torn like an old faded pair of jeans. The difference was that I was not comfortable with this simple request.

“Yes, I wanted to play” part of me thought. *“No! You must work and grow your company”* was the conflicting thought. Back and forth in my mind these two thoughts raced. In a moment as quick as the request was offered to me, I looked at my boy and said *“yes, let’s play”*.

“Cool Dad” he stated, *“let’s play Chutes and Ladders”*. *“You have got to be kidding me – CHUTES and LADDERS, come on little buddy how about poker”*, I thought. With a hesitant smile I was off with him to play Chutes and Ladders. He opened the box, we set up the board and put two of those extremely happy people pieces on square #1. I could not remember when I last played THIS GAME, I tried to be as happy as the people pieces looked.

We began to take turns spinning the number spinner and moving our pieces. I explained to him how to move his people piece back and forth along the rows, hoping to climb the ladders and to avoid sliding down the slides. I pointed to the final square, THE ULTIMATE GOAL, the winning square with the blue ribbon and the gold numbers 1 – 0 – 0.

“This is the square you want to get to Duncan to WIN THE GAME” I told him. As he spun the number spinner, I showed him which direction to move. It was not long before he landed on a ladder, I gladly showed him how to climb the ladder. *“Climbing the ladder Duncan moves you closer to the top”* I told him. We took a few turns back and forth moving our pieces along the rows. I hit a slide and down I went thinking only about how this game may take longer than I wished it would take to finish. Work was on my mind.

As Duncan was climbing he landed on a space with a slide and as he slid down the slide he threw his hands above his head his head and hollered out a “whoooooooooooo”. I looked at him puzzled, taken by his joyful response. We kept playing, taking turns moving our game pieces, climbing ladders with me repeatedly pointing out to Duncan the ULTIMATE GOAL. “Remember, you want to get to this space here with the blue ribbon and the gold numbers 1 – 0 – 0, that is the space you want to get to too WIN!”

A voice went off in my head – “WIN DUNCAN WIN! Climb the ladders of life son, you can DO IT! Climb WIN!”

It was then that he was close to the final square, but he landed on the space with the largest slide in the game. As he slid down the slide he again threw up his arms and bellowed out another joyous “whoooooooooooo”. I could not believe it, this game was going to continue, OH NOOOOOO then it struck me. Duncan was having the most fun sliding down the slides.

This game I wanted him to win so bad, this game I wanted to be over sooner rather than later, this game of life lesson of *climbing to the top* to WIN SON WIN! – is not what is most important. He just wanted to PLAY.

He reminded me that climbing the ladders of life is not what is most important. He reminded me to enjoy the slides of life and that *the slides* do come to an end. He reminded me to play, holler, laugh and enjoy. I have asked him many times since if he wanted to play Chutes and Ladders.

Listen to Joe’s free daily podcast – **Teen Success Radio** – available on iTunes.
His new book **The Greatest Teenage Myth in the World** is now available @
www.JosephGandolfo.com or www.TheGreatestTeenageMythInTheWorld.com

Joe Gandolfo is on a mission to ***champion the greatest commodity in today's world – our youth, teenagers, young adults and college students***, and to rally, strengthen and energize the adults – parents, educators, mental health professionals and organizations - who work with and care about our greatest commodity in the world.

Joe works as a ***professional speaker, success coach, seminar leader motivational counselor and author***. He brings 20 years experience working with youth, teen-agers, student-athletes, professional athletes, adults, parents, educators, public and private schools, organizations and associations.

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He has been an adjunct professor at Georgia Tech (1996-2000) and Georgia State (2005-06). He was on staff at the Homer Rice Center for Sports Performance (2000-07). He has had a private consulting practice since 1991.

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