

KeeNote: My \$45 mistake (1-20-21)

“This is a piece of junk,” my uncle Jerry declared as he attempted to fix the bookshelf I purchased at a thrift store.

“How much did you pay for this?” my aunt Amy asked me, with a hint of worry in her voice.

“\$45,” I replied, with an embarrassed smile.

“Well, live and learn. We learn from our mistakes, and I guess this was just your \$45 mistake,” Amy laughed.

She was right, though.

Without naming names, there’s a certain thrift store in Sioux Falls that posts pictures of its updated inventory each day, and when my mom spied a bookshelf just like the one I’d been looking for, she immediately texted me with the good news.

So, when I got off work that day, I made the journey during rush hour—perhaps my first mistake of the experience—to the thrift store. When I got inside, I asked if the bookshelf was still available and after the employee confirmed that it was, I instantly responded with, “I’ll take it.”

The accommodating employee then loaded it into my car for me and said, “Make sure you have someone help you with this. It’s a little rickety.”

Hindsight is 20/20.

After the whole debacle of getting it into my apartment, I realized it was more than a little rickety. I was afraid that if I tapped it with just a little too much force that it would collapse into a pile of wood and rusty nails.

So, I called on Jerry and Amy to come help me stabilize the “piece of junk.” And, when I say help, I mean that I stayed out of their way and offered encouragement.

After a while, I declared that we could just give up, but Jerry—the persistent person that he is—was determined to make it at least temporarily functional. Nails were hammered and pieces of the wood came off in chunks, but they finally made it stable enough to hold some books. Although, they really stressed that I put my heaviest books on the bottom shelf lest all their hard work come crashing down.

I now have a functional bookshelf. It’s certainly no prize, and it’ll never be the pièce de résistance of my apartment, but it’s certainly a prominent reminder to me that I should always, always check things out before I buy them. I’d say that also applies to checking your drive-thru order before driving away or watching the prices appear on the screen when you buy literally anything at any store, especially if it’s supposed to be on sale.

My mom has been instilling this in me my whole life, but apparently becoming an adult means you're destined to make your own mistakes—in my case, \$45 ones.