



## Tia and the wasted talent

"Right!" yelled Miss Phillips over the chatter of students. "That's the last dance class of the year! I'll see you after the summer holidays. Make sure you keep practising. I don't want to have to do a load of fitness and conditioning work come September!"

The dance studio began to empty. "You going on holiday this summer?" asked Tia, shoving her jazz shoes into her bag.

"Not sure," replied Kelvin. "We were going to see my gran in Jamaica, but my mum doesn't have too much money."

"Oh, I'd love to go to Jamaica," said Nadia. "We only ever make it as far as Dorset."

Miss Phillips sashayed up to the three friends. "Come on, you three, get a move on. And don't forget to practise over the summer. You've all got talent, don't let it go to waste."

Tia threw her bag over her shoulder. "Of course not, Miss!" she said, walking out of the door, followed by Kelvin and Nadia.

"Again! Step, turn, pivot. Step, kick, point! Again!"

Kelvin and Nadia kicked and turned and pivoted as Miss Phillips shouted out the steps. But Tia was at least three steps behind.

Kelvin turned to look at his friend. "What are you doing? Keep up!"

"I...can't...!...oh, my legs..." Tia puffed and groaned as she struggled to follow the routine.

"Tia! What on earth's going on?" shouted Miss Phillips as she marched up to her. "Why can't you keep up? Did you do any practice at all over the holidays?"

Tia bent over with her hands on her knees, trying to get her breath back.

"I didn't...want to...to get injured," she wheezed.

"What did I say in July? You have to practise! That's it. Get your things. You're going to have to go down to the basic class until you get your fitness back. It's unacceptable!"

"But Miss!"

"But nothing. Go on," said Miss Phillips. "Nadia, take Tia's place."

Tia grabbed her bag and ran out of the room, down the corridor to where the kids half her age were practising ballet positions. Miss Phillips returned to the front of the class.

"I won't have people wasting their talent. Right, again! Step, turn, pivot. Step, kick, point! Again!"

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What do you think of the way Miss Phillips treated Tia?
- What do you make of Tia's excuse for not practising?
- What skills and talents do you have? (Or what gifts has God given you?) How do you make use of them?
- Is it enough just to be good at something (or to have a lot of something, like money or possessions)? Why? Why not?

This story is based on Matthew 25:14–30. Read the passage with the group and compare it with this one. Discuss what Jesus might have been saying through this story, encouraging the young people to think about the parable in a new way.

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## Virtual insanity

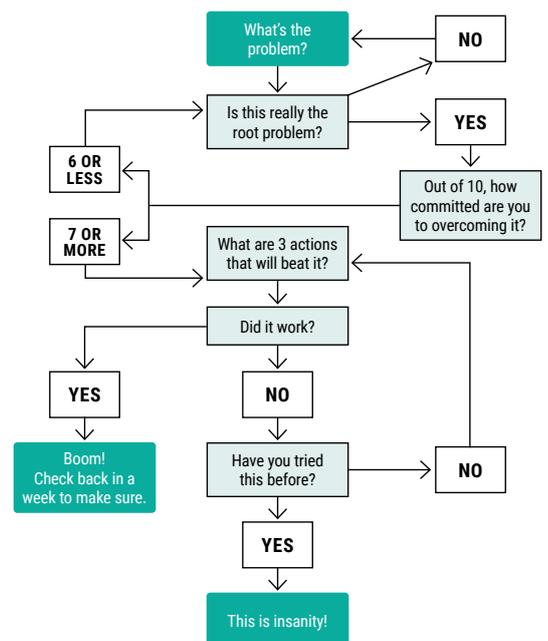
Last night I cooked far too much rice for the family. Again. I always make the same mistake: I'll work out in my head how much should be (more than) enough based on my not inconsiderable adult male appetite, then (generously) guesstimate it using a cup, adding a bit to be on the safe side. When it's in the pan I'll panic and throw in another last handful...and then one more little pinch just to be sure. Somehow, I'm always shocked when it turns out I could have fed the whole street. It's insanity. I do the same thing wrong every time and just never learn my lesson.

Hopefully you don't share my weird phobia of underestimating quantities, but no doubt you will recognise the pattern in some way from your own life. Sometimes it is something small and inconsequential, but other times it can be more serious, such as a repetitive cycle of unhealthy behaviour, for example ending up drunk when you go out, giving in to watching porn again, or getting into relationships with the wrong kind of boy or girl time after time. The problem is that when you keep using the same solution each time history repeats itself.

The answer to my rice issue of course is to weigh it using scales, and to laugh about it with my family so they keep me accountable when they see me trying to guess the next time. Talk to your mentee about the things they want to beat or avoid that they keep slipping up on in exactly the same way. Can you help them identify a new way of looking at it; a new approach; a 90-degree change of direction that can finally get them to a useful solution?

Draw a flow chart to help them understand how to avoid repeating futile actions. (There is a large version of this you can use at [youthandchildrens.work/links](http://youthandchildrens.work/links).)

Chat through the flow chart and help them use it to think through an issue they want to resolve differently.



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