

Grabbing the Brass Ring

On a carousel, a small brass ring was often presented to a rider during the course of a ride. Devices offering brass rings were developed during the heyday of the carousel in the U.S.--about 1880 to 1920. At one time, the riders on the outside row of horses were given a challenge as a way to draw interest and build excitement. Usually there are a large number of iron rings and one brass one. Once the ride started moving, a metal arm was swung out for riders to try to grasp the ring from. As the wooden horses or other creatures circled around the center of the carousel, rings were fed to one end of a wooden arm that was suspended above the riders, who hoped that the timing of their horse's rise would coincide with their approach to the ring, from which they would try to grab the brass ring.

It takes dexterity and it takes effort to grab a ring from the dispenser as the carousel rotates. Typically, grabbing the brass ring gets the rider some sort of prize. Some riders choose to sit on the inside or on horse that doesn't move, safe from falling, but where they cannot reach the brass ring.

Not everyone reaching for the prize is able to get it. Some fall off their rides. Some grab the iron rings. But those who do grab the brass ring are rewarded for their efforts in rising to the challenge. The phrase "to grab the brass ring" has therefore come to mean 'striving for the highest prize', or 'living life to the fullest'.

As Sea Scouts we start our Scout Oath with the phrase 'On My Honor I Will Do My Best' and our Sea Promise with 'As a Sea Scout I Promise to Do My Best'. In what ever challenge is presented to you, do you do your best? Do you choose to live life to the fullest, trying to grab each brass ring as it goes by? Do you take the opportunities and challenges presented to you in Sea Scouting and in life and meet them with excitement, anticipation, and desire: striving for the highest prize; living life to the fullest?

Or are you one of those who sit where there is no prize to grab, no adventure, no challenge – and no brass ring? There is no shame in trying to grab the brass ring. There is no shame in failing to grab the brass ring – because at least you tried. The only shame lies in not trying, in not doing your best. Which will you choose to do: try or not try; do or not do? Will you grab the brass ring?

There are some awesome opportunities and prizes awaiting you in Sea Scouting and in life – will you do your best to seize each one each and every time? The ones who do are the ones who will rise among us as leaders and adventurers, scientists and discoverers, teachers and scholars.

As advisors, we put a lot of time and effort, hoping to work with those among you who always reach out 'to grab the brass ring'. Will you be one who grabs the brass ring? I wonder.