

A Generous Attitude

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“I believe that authentic human nature is a happy one, where we are able to contribute positively to our surrounding environment in one way or another. I think it is a fundamental human characteristic to be generous. However, to express this generosity at all times and not just when it is convenient or when it benefits us, requires a deep sense of inner security; a security that doesn’t derive from any social status or bank account or particular relationship, for then it cannot be permanent.”

If our sense of security is based on anything external, then there will also be fear mixed in that safety. People who draw their sense of security from such sources depend on and are tied to them. Their life is influenced by whatever happens to their support systems. Such people will suffer. If others get a better share, receive recognition or achieve success, they feel as if something has being denied or taken away from them.

They feel threatened. They cannot enjoy the success of other people, as they are accustomed to basing their success on being superior in their environment. The more we focus on the values and principles of generosity, share our success, and celebrate others success the more our own lives are enriched.

Being inspired by another’s’ success means we learn from their successes rather than compete against them.

Some years ago I went through a difficult phase of self-rejection and complete lack of self-respect. It was a time when I didn't care at all about the consequences of my choices, although I knew they would not be the best. At that time, some friends kept believing in me, kept encouraging me by showing their love and understanding of what I was going through. It was impossible then to trust myself, but I could trust them because they were living the highest principle of love, that of genuine respect. The generosity of their unbroken faith and their compassion for my well-being helped me tremendously to gradually shift my consciousness towards a new upward spiral in my life. I truly discovered the value of friendship.

People with this kind of generous attitude don't hesitate to show their good feelings, to praise someone genuinely, to show the other person with appropriate words and manners that they are valuable. Because their security comes from their deeply held values and principles, they can express their goodness freely and without the fear that they might be taken advantage of.

Generous individuals are able to forgive both themselves and others for they understand the life-supporting principle of non-violence. That's why they never judge others, or themselves, no matter how far-reaching their mistakes may have been. They never waste their precious energy in complaining about yesterday, nor do they sit and just dream about their future. They learn how to make maximum use of their present opportunities, understand their past mistakes, and plan carefully for the future. This art of being a student of life enables them to adapt easily and be flexible in ever-changing circumstances. Their honest wish to help is sometimes apparent through their humour, even when facing adverse situations. They are willing to accept and correct their mistakes, before they become a burden on their conscience.

Such people know how to distinguish the person from the problem. This ability helps them to offer solutions instead of creating more problems. They concentrate their energy on common interests, instead of fighting for a position or possession. Others gradually discover their authentic honesty and are inspired to co-operate with them.

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Those who think in a generous way know how to serve quietly. Serving others' true needs is one of the greatest pleasures in life. Just think back in your life for a moment. What were the circumstances when you experienced the greatest happiness and joy? Was it during times when you received something precious from your loved ones? Or was it during times when you yourself gave something valuable to another person which meant a lot to them? I believe most of us would opt for the latter. Time and again, I have seen that this is indeed the innate nature of every individual - it's just that the conditions to express this nature have become a rare phenomenon.

When we have the intention of serving others - in whatever form required at that moment - and if we do it without any selfish interest for a return, our inner sense of security and contentment increases. This in turn leads us to be even more generous minded.

When we have an attitude of learning from whatever happens to us, we are able to remain open, using the different opportunities with which we are

presented. Our sense of security - emotional, psychological and financial - is then tied to our ability to acquire knowledge and to be creative, rather than on some relationship or our professional situation. Those who know how to increase their value take the initiative and apply practical solutions. When learning stops, dependency on people and situations increases and then we don't easily dare to risk anything. We then become hyper-protective and enter the golden cage of our comfort zones where 'deadly security' reigns supreme. Deadly, because our creative imagination is killed, personal development shuts down and generosity is impossible.

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Individuals who are willing to expand their horizons of understanding and success are open to new opportunities, knowing that these will often come from people and places unexpectedly. They are aware of the influence that genetic, historical and environmental forces have in the developmental process of people, communities, organisations, and societies, but they don't allow themselves to be limited by these factors. They are aware of the paralysing effect that results from blaming and complaining and so they are very careful not to waste their precious energy in this. No problem catches them by surprise. They are creative, focusing their attention only on the aspects they can change.

They are understanding and tolerant of the mistakes of others. They never participate in sustaining a 'blame culture' so prevalent in today's organisation, and then continuously focus on their own responsibility.

By blaming others we lose the right to and the freedom of choice, thus we feel compelled to do things that are even

contrary to our beliefs. By blaming someone we give that person power over us. We empower their weakness and in fact we develop the same weaknesses without even realising. Then we either find or create proof in order to support our accusations. Again this blocks our creativity and increases our mental and emotional bondage, bringing the available choices down to zero level. The result is a continuous reactivity towards one thing or the other.

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Choosing and reacting are very different from each other. Choosing means we are no longer the victim of situations or people; we are able to decide consciously how best to respond to them. Realising that we have both the right and the power to choose the quality of our response, we gain authority over ourselves, over our emotions and habits. We cease to think of ourselves as being powerless or subservient to certain people or situations. At any given moment we have this choice; we can decide to act or to react, to stay as we are or to improve.

To have a creative attitude means to focus on the person and not the product, on improving interpersonal relationships rather than achieving some position. It means to focus more on our values than on action plans and goals. The more we exercise our freedom to choose our response, the more that freedom keeps on increasing, creating vast possibilities for a successful and mutually rewarding co-existence.

