

Values in Mine Own Eyes

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Tips of the Day · 2 min read

Generally speaking, we have part of us that seeks our values dependent on what society calls success in order to make us feel good about ourselves. But there is also a part of us that is self-accepting. The more we are self-accepting, the less we will feel the need for others to praise us. So we don't care so much for the trappings of 'success'. Our work in itself and our life-style are self-satisfying. Because we are not so caught up in how we look in others' eyes, we can open up to the other. We relate not from a position of 'what should you do for me to make me feel good' or 'what should I do to make you think highly of me, so I can feel good about myself', but 'what can I do for you', 'What can we share'. We will find ourselves more interested in the other, more caring. When this is generalised we begin to care about the environment, about human right issues, about other people's sufferings. Because we don't seek praise, since self-acceptance brings joy-in-oneself, we can admire others and rejoice in their success. Because we don't need friends for our psychological well-being, we can enter into generous friendships. Because our relationship with our family is based on love rather than psychological need, we care for them without a feeling of imposed obligation or demand – even should they be demanding or try to make us feel obliged. We are willing to put ourselves out to do what we can for the sick and elderly. We don't experience them as a burden. When this is generalised, we may find ourselves more involved in society as a whole, perhaps in some charity work. Because we don't set our values by the standards of others, we can be more objective about social standards and we find we can form standards that are true to ourselves. They need not necessarily be any different, but they arise from within us. We don't impose them on ourselves because we want the admiration of others. How to develop these qualities? As usual, we have to be aware of our motivations. Many are by now so habitual they are subliminal. We are not always aware of them. It is by way of the reaction we have that tells us what the original motivation was. Should we notice any painful or unwholesome reaction, we can stop and reflect, and thereby see any unwholesome aspect of our original motivation. Why are we upset when someone doesn't say 'thank you'? Or why do we feel so belittled when someone criticises us? Or why we do feel bored or averse to what we are doing when we were once very interested and engaged? Once we become aware of unwholesome intentions, we can make sure that when we do something similar or meet the same person again we approach with the right motivation. As always, the trick is mindfulness and wise reflection – and Right Intention.

Transcriptions produced locally using Swiss low-carbon electricity. Corrections and rewriting by cloud-hosted AI.