



TESS Newsletter

Accordance to Article 7
Section 3 of its Constitution

No. 11 of 12 August 2014
Episode 109

“ Turning Possibilities into Realities ”

Building a Global Movement for Change [UNSG]: The Promise (part 41)



“Working Hard at Working Smart” (part LII)

Accepting Other People's Differences



“Difference is of the essence of humanity. Difference is an accident of birth and it should therefore never be the source of hatred or conflict. The answer to difference is to respect it. Therein lies a most fundamental principle of peace: respect for diversity”.

John Hume [born 1937]
Winner of the Nobel Peace Prize 1998

The future we want: The Promise: The Force Beyond

Accepting Other People's Differences

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We are all the products of our own individual upbringing and experiences so it is completely natural that we will all have differences in opinions on a wide range of issues.

The world would be a very dull place if we were all the same and it's the incredible diversity amongst people throughout the world that makes it such a fascinating place.

The World is Getting Smaller

Cheaper air travel and the internet has made the world seem a much smaller place and we are increasingly brought into contact with people from many different ethnicities religious backgrounds, languages, cultures and belief systems. You can see this every day on TV, on the news, in newspapers, out and about in society etc. To feel comfortable about people whom we encounter means that we must feel comfortable about ourselves and this means accepting ourselves for what we are.

Prejudices

Unfortunately, many people put up barriers to protect themselves instead of opening themselves up to others. This, in turn, leads to a mistrust of others regardless of colour, religion, gender or any other stereotypical excuse given as to why we fear others and, on a global scale, **this is often borne out in the wars that we see around the world and in an increase in terrorist activities.** We all know that these kinds of responses only really fuel further mistrust yet, even in our own immediate environments such as the workplace or even in our local pub, we all tend to congregate in our little groups **without giving much thought to others around us.**

Benefits of Being Open to Others

When we get to learn about others and respect our similarities and our differences, we get to learn so much more about the world and about ourselves and this helps us to grow spiritually, instead of stagnating. It also opens the doors to many other opportunities, be they friendships, work prospects, travel possibilities or a wider understanding of the world in which we live.

How to Become More Tolerant and Accept Others Openly

Many people who are fearful of others are not so because they have any sense of resentment towards them but because they're not sure how to go about communicating with them and also because they fear that their own little 'cocoon of protection' might be threatened. In other words, they make the mistake of believing that others' viewpoints and opinions might open them up to the risk that their own opinions may be deemed worthless. **This is simply not true.** What is important is that everybody is entitled to a viewpoint or opinion and we should respect that right even if we don't necessarily agree with it.

Tolerance is the key but you can still maintain your own identity and still have valid viewpoints. Remember, even identical twins have their own individual experiences and opinions and you probably don't agree with everything your parents or children say but does that necessarily compromise you?

There are many things we can do to move towards accepting other people's opinions and respecting our differences. **At a very basic level, we should treat others with the same degree of respect as we would like to be treated ourselves.** We should embrace our differences, not be afraid of them and we should never judge a person on our first impression which is often about how he or she looks. Taking the time to get to know the person within is a far better indicator than pre-judging them on appearances alone.

Getting to truly know a new person who we may feel is quite different to us can be a very rewarding experience. It's true that when we're looking to make friends or start relationships that we tend to gravitate towards people we believe are similar in outlook to ourselves but in restricting ourselves to that mindset, we can often miss out on many interesting experiences.

Be Prepared to Listen

Communication isn't simply about talking. In fact, some of the best communicators on the world stage tend to be less 'vocal' than we might think they'd need to be to be effective communicators. **Take Kofi Annan at the UN for instance.** He holds one of the world's most powerful positions when it comes to mediating between powerful people from different countries often with major differences in opinion but he's good at what he does as he's a good listener and, in effective communication, **it's listening that's often the key.**

Take time to listen to other's opinions and acknowledge them and also be confident to express your own. Listening to other's opinions doesn't mean you have to deviate from your own firmly held viewpoint, although a diverse opinion to your own can sometimes make you think about things in a different light. **This is all part of a maturing of the mind.** It's not about convincing others that you are right or about them convincing you that they're right but simply a matter of being understood and an acceptance that you might agree to disagree.

If people become more tolerant towards others and take time to get to know some of those

with whom they were unfamiliar with previously, it would lead to a far more peaceful and understanding world and, ultimately when considering your own self-growth, an acceptance of other people's differences is a sure-fire way of gaining a more complete acceptance of yourself.

Making A Difference

Mutual Understanding

It's not about 'winning' but about reaching a satisfactory solution that is mutually agreed to by both of you and allowing the other person to also suggest a possible compromise solution if you are both unable to reach an agreement.

Compromise is not a sign of weakness but a sign of maturity and, whilst you may not feel you can compromise on certain issues, most disagreements tend to be more amicably resolved if there's a little give and take on both sides.

Always remember that disagreements and conflict, whilst not always pleasant, are, however, a fundamental part of life. They are inevitable from time to time and, managed well, are often simply the mechanism which allows us to get over a particular hurdle and to move on positively.

And the time to get moving is now...!

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