**Life Lesson**

**Issues of Respect, Esteem, Honor, Worth, and Value:**

**Discerning our Healthy from our Toxic Ways of Life**

The issues of respect, honor, and worth lie at the very cores of our identity. They are pivotal in motivating how we use all the life resources that that make us either sick or healthy. If I think that my gifts, desires, or accomplishments make me special or entitle me to special privileges, I will make myself and others sick by wanting more and more of their admiration. By contrast, if I think of myself as just a normal, regular person entitled to nothing special, then I am free to notice and appreciate special moments when they come along. I will experience them with all the wonder, gratitude, and joy of a child, rather than like a scheming, selfish person does, with shaky performance anxiety, or smug self-congratulation. The Greek word *humus* for soil is the root for our words *human, humor,* and *humble,* which allcome from being down to earth. Remembering that **wellness is whatever does the most good and the least harm to the most people in the long run,** it is healthy to believe that all people have unique existential value, that we all have potential for both good and evil, to grow up or down in a crisis, to become both sick and healthy, as we choose.

Let’s look at the chart of our nine basic soul foods, the neutral life experiences that come to us all. Depending how we seek out respect, esteem, honor, worth, and value, and how we share them, these resources can be used to make ourselves and others either sick or healthy. Looking at our two contrasting lists of what breeds illness or wellness, we can learn a lot about ourselves by asking questions like these:

* *Who and what do I honor as most important in my life, as most valuable to me?*
* *What people and groups do I respect the most? Who do* they *most respect, and who respects them?*
* *Who most respects me? What kind of people respect them?*
* *Whose approval do I try hardest to get? What things do I do to get that approval?*

Experiences that feed a person’s vitality we have called *soul foods.* Here are ten “A-foods” that signify respect, that can help us see where ours is coming in from, and going out to:

**Adoration Attention Acceptance Attraction Appreciation**

**Admiration Affection Atonement Approval Acknowledgement**

The key to health and wellness is to *realize* that the more we draw these from and give them to healthy people and groups, the more we and they have to give to others over time. When we draw and give them from people who aren’t well, we find we get drained. We have less and less to give, and they drain others as well. Whether in sickness or in health, we reap what we sow.

Below are contrasting mindsets and habits that will produce more illness or wellness in people, depending on how they use the neutral resources of respect, honor, and worth:

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| ***Sickening Beliefs about Respect*** | ***Healthy Beliefs about Respect*** |
| I can easily tell who’s worth knowing, & who’s not. | Deep down, below the obvious, everyone is worth knowing. |
| All authority and government are corrupt, suspect. | We need healthy people in authority for the common good. |
| I can only trust my own experiences and beliefs. | I value the collective wisdom and welfare of others over mine. |
| I devalue your pain and weakness, and my own. | Pain, mystery and weakness draw and bond us to each other. |
| I cherish things that make me feel better than you. | Pride and shame are flip sides of every inflated self-image. |
| I love being in control so I can do things just right. | I’m never in control of others; perfection is an illusion too. |
| My life is what I have made it to be – I deserve it. | My good gifts, breaks, helpers make me humbly grateful. |
| I have no need for those who are beneath me. | I can’t do or become much without others’ love and help. |
| If I can see it, I can be it: I love image management. | Our own image management will deceive and betray us. |
| I want all the freedom and happiness I can get, and I’ll take yours to get more for myself. | We all deserve life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and I’ll share mine to make more for us all. |

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| ***Sickening Habits with Respect*** | ***Healthy Habits with Respect*** |
| I post and vote my opposition to things I distrust. | I post and vote my support of things for the common good. |
| I give my respect and attention to those who earn it. | I try to give listening respect and common courtesies to all. |
| I hide and lie about my failures and weaknesses. | I share my failures and faults to atone for and learn from them. |
| I need my body, house, and car to look attractive. | I want to be respected for my relationships and life work. |
| I focus on things I can control to make them perfect. | I just try to do the best I can, and leave the results to God. |
| I idolize admirable people, and I want to be idolized. | I seek the approval of God, & those who know and love me. |
| I only run with people I can use, admire, or enjoy. | I enjoy relating with folks in all walks of life, high and low. |
| I enjoy knowing how to judge the worth of others. | Who am I to judge you? And who are you to judge me? |
| This is a dog-eat-dog world: the big dogs rule. | This world has a created harmony I seek to line up with. |
| I hate being embarrassed, can’t stand for it to show. | I have learned to enjoy being human when I’m embarrassed. |

***A wise man once challenged his mentees in a healthy community to “outdo one another in showing honor.” Even for type A’s driven to excel, that is a very healthy competition, and any group or relationship that embraces it will be kept full of life.***

**Balancing Respect for Self and Others: Selfish Pride vs. Humility**

Selfish Pride is the habit of thinking too much of ourselves, having too much regard for our worth, importance, intelligence, charm, looks, etc. The flip side of that coin is insecurity, which is a constant undercurrent for vain people. It erupts to the surface at times of failure and rejection. For others, it stays on top in the way they act and treat themselves as worthless. They could appreciate their worth if they didn’t keep expecting themselves to be and do more than they can (that’s from underlying superiority). The following scriptures explain the causes, consequences, and corrections of this attitude of Selfish Pride, as well as its positive counterpart, genuine Humility.

**CAUSES**

1. Pretending “I am alone. No one sees me. There is no God.” **Isaiah 47: 8-11**

2. Denying the world was created by God, and in place of God, idolizing something or

someone that was created. **Rom 1: 21-32**

3. “Praying” to self instead of God. **Lk 18: 9-14**

4. Taking credit for God’s gifts. **Prov 27:21,** **Rom 12: 3**

5. Trusting in one’s own moral purity and will power to impress God. **Job 25: 1, 4-6; 27: 1,**

**4- 6; 38: 1-4; 42: 1-6**

6. Trying to impress others. **Matt 6: 16-18; 23: 4-12**

7. Fooling oneself into believing that others are impressed. **Luke 14: 7-11**

**CONSEQUENCES -** There is always a fall - what blows up, must come down. **Prov 16:18, 18:12**

1. God will show us who he is. **Job 42: 1-6**

2. If this is denied, God gives people up to their own lusts and depraved minds. **Rom 1:**

**21-32**

3. God does not answer prayer, or give expected rewards. **Mt 6: 16-18**

4. Selfish Pride evokes the judgmental side of others. **Mt 7:1**

5. Proud people embarrass and humiliate themselves; they look ridiculous when exposed.

**Mt 7: 2-5, Luke 14: 17-24**

6. They deceive themselves. **Gal 6:3 and Rom 1:21-25**

7. Other people reject them, and they don’t know why. **Isaiah 47: 8-11**

8. Selfish Pride, the chief of the seven deadly sins, has always been considered basic, leading

to all the others. **Rom 1: 21-32**

9. The humble, on the other hand, are exalted, both in this life (**Luke 14: 7-11; 18:9-14)**

and the next (**Mt 5: 3, 5**).

**CORRECTIONS --** Discipline is given by God (see verses above), which is accepted and extended

(through self-discipline) by the humble. Here’s how:

Meditate on **Psalm 51.** Make it your prayer.

Try not to judge others. **Mt 7:1, Rom 14: 4**

Appreciate God’s gifts. Be thankful for them, and don’t steal God’s glory. **Rom 12: 3**

Associate with people who are “beneath you.” **Rom 12:16**

Esteem others even more than self. Follow Christ’s example: turn down the quest for fame,

and take up the role of servant. **Phil 2: 3-9**

Humility is a gift, the fruit of the Spirit (meekness – **Gal 5: 22-23**). It can be expressed and

practiced once it is given, but it cannot be created by self-discipline alone.

**RAISING CHILDREN WHO ESTEEM THEMSELVES**

**(AND RESPECT OTHERS TOO)**

Perhaps your children act like they think too much of others (idolizing them), or too little of them (dehumanizing, demonizing). Or maybe in similar ways, they think too much or too little of themselves. The easiest way to find a happy medium with respect is to teach them an attitude of gratitude. Ask them to count their blessings, showing they appreciate what’s been given to them that they didn’t earn, that others don’t get. Ask them to do the same with those they idolize, looking at all they have been given. Ask them to consider the many disadvantages of those they look down on.

Those who think too much or too little of themselves have one thing in common – they are self-centered. Whether your children show arrogance or shame, they believe they are somehow special. No healthy person is going to treat them that way, so they need to get over themselves while they are still young.

Kids who don’t receive time and undivided attention from their parents will struggle with self-confidence unless somebody else gives them these things. Whoever gives them self-worth this way often gives them their values and beliefs as well. So make sure that’s you.

***The 10 A-pills***

Honor, value, and esteem are shown by how we give and receive these ten expressions of respect: **acceptance, acknowledgement, admiration, adoration, affection, approval, appreciation, atonement, attraction,** and the first thing that starts it all, **attention**. These “A-pills” are the building blocks of self-esteem. Tracking where our children get their A-pills, and who they give theirs to, will explain a lot about the other choices they make. Teach them to *lean into people who give them more of these A-pills than they expect to receive.* That should include you. And likewise they need to beware those who expect to be given more than they seem to give. This might show them their idols are toxic.

During the Covid pandemic, wearing **facemasks** and how we talked about them were opportunities to show respect or disrespect, for both self and others. **Manners** are key to giving and receiving respect. Saying *please* and *thank* *you* brings help and self-respect our way. When someone disrespects us, we need to use mutually respectful comebacks, most effectively with a smile: *“Are you asking or telling me?”* or *“That’s your opinion.”*

***Pre-school Years***

Respect is taught in rules for play, how we treat our siblings and friends. Let’s teach our children how we enjoy life more when we are honest, kind, and fair. *“The reason you’re bored/lonely/unhappy is that nobody wants to play with you. If you want to play with others,* ***take turns, share, and show joy when other people win****.”* That grows their self-respect. **We get what we give, we reap what we sow.** A practical reason for the golden rule is that people tend to do unto us as we have done unto them.

***Elementary School Years***

Being kind to those who are kind to us is a start in building self-esteem. But being kind to those who can’t give us much back grows our self-worth even more. Give your children their favorite A-pills at this age whenever they are kind to new kids, teased kids, or those of different race, religion, or standard of living. Teach them to respect others not for what they have, but for *what they have done* with what they have. Ask your kids if they and their friends are making the world a better place to live for themselves, or for everyone they meet. That where *your* honor should clearly go.

***Middle and High School Years***

It is all too common to see teenagers lose interest in other people. They reserve most of their respect for their love interests and their peer group. **When most adolescents come into a peer group or love relationship, too often they start showing less respect for outsiders,** especially for authority figures. Parents can track where the disrespect comes from, and make the teen’s contact with these sources more difficult. Whatever they abuse they can lose. Teens who want to earn back lost privileges, devices, and relationships will, *if you require it,* show more thoughtful words and deeds toward others.

Finally, ***we all need to learn to laugh at ourselves.*** It is healthy to enjoy teasing about our common human failures and limitations. If your child refuses to see this, you can show them how funny it is to watch a person who always takes themselves seriously. The point of this, of all these parenting tips, is for your children to **show modest and moderate respect** for themselves, and likewise for all other people. The smaller their circle of respect, the faster they will spin in circles. The wider that circle of respect gets, the farther they can go in life, and the more they will enjoy the journey.