

# Youth & Education

February 1, 2000

## Still Thoughts Afterthoughts: Take a Step Back When Dealing with Others

Stanford Tzu Ching Discussion Group

Take a step back when dealing with others. Be more generous when loving others. This way, you will be happy in the course of your life...

— From *The Still Thoughts*

### REACTIONS

• What does it mean to step back? Perhaps it's about abandoning the tunnel vision that we sometimes have when we focus on all the things we have to do and don't even realize that we can take out ten minutes of our time just to "be" with a friend who doesn't necessarily "need" you at the present moment. So, instead if you are less focused on ourselves and worried about being efficient, we can be spontaneous in spending time with other people and give the little gifts of time and company.

• Sometimes, we get mad at our friends because they don't spend enough time with us...but why do we need to wait for them to visit us? Instead of focusing on what they don't do, think about what "we" do for them... Maybe instead of being angry with them, we can learn to be more giving, and to give to others the way we would like ourselves to be given. We can be more generous with our own time, be more forgiving, caring, thoughtful of their needs.

• We can be more generous in giving out our love, even to strangers. Sometimes, we only want to talk to the people we know and are familiar with, but it really doesn't take much for us to give our love to one more person. There's no such thing as having a limited amount of love...it's not as if we can only care about an X number of people.

• It may be true that we have limited time to care for everyone, but if there is someone who comes upon our path and seeks our friendship, it doesn't take that much to care for one more person, especially if that person is someone who seeks our care.

• We should give people what they

need instead of what we are willing to give them.

• Stepping back can resolve problems because then we can see the bigger picture. There's an old story about a group of blind people trying to guess what an elephant is by feeling its different parts. The blind person touching the tail thought it was a whip while another blind person holding a trunk of the animal thought it was a tree. This story tells us that when we become too engaged with our limited view, we may be mistaken and that seeing the bigger picture can give us greater insight.

• Do the two statements of stepping back and being more generous conflict? Not really, because stepping back can be a mental gesture, where we don't get caught up in the situation. We are not distancing ourselves from the situation by not caring, but we are just disengaging ourselves from a certain perspective. In this way, we can be more helpful. For instance, sometimes we get so caught up in feeling the need to help other people when listening to their problems that we don't have the perspective to be as helpful as we can be.

• Friendships are so precious...they are certainly worth our spending more time and being more generous.

• Being more generous means being more accepting. Instead of being nit-picky about a friend's little idiosyncrasies, learn to be more tolerant and to see the WHOLE person. Just let go of the thoughts about the parts that you don't like.

• Sometimes, it is hardest to be gener-



Students of Dallas Tzu Chi Academy celebrate the school's 2nd birthday with lion dance.

ous to the people we care about most, such as our family. Why? Perhaps we take them for granted because we think they will always be there, or that we don't need to impress them by being nice since they are so close to us. But actually, we should be on our "best" behavior for those that we love most!

• Oftentimes, it seems hardest to give to the people we care about, but these are the people we have the greatest capability to hurt most.

• This idea of stepping back could be an answer when we start to let outside things get to us. Even a literal application helps, such as when we are driving a car and we're mad that someone is cutting into our lane...just step back and slow down...

### APPLICATIONS

- This can be applied on many different levels...for people close to you (such as family, friends), and strangers.
- Try to do what our friends do for us. Instead of demanding from them, we will give more to them.
- Talk to more people in the dorm, get

to know others better, and care about more people.

- Give more than we think we can...and see what happens. Give 10% more...
- Don't be picky about other people's idiosyncrasies. See their good parts and like them as a person.
- Seeing the good parts of people becomes especially relevant when dealing with difficulties with conflicting friends, look at the whole picture, instead of trying to resolve this or that misunderstanding. See the grand scheme of things.
- For each situation...do the "opposite." For example, if a person is our competitor, praise the person for the thing that we're competing about. If the person is a friend, say something encouraging that we've never said before, things that we didn't say because we took it for granted that they don't need to be said. This is taking a step "forward" to say nice things to a friend, but taking a step "back" in our hearts, by breaking down some of our internal barriers.
- Be more tolerant to others and more generous with our time. Be more generous and loving, instead of just demanding. Make the other person feel appreciated.

## Collecting Kind Hearts on the Streets

John Huang, Seattle

During the fund-raiser for Taiwan earthquake relief, I was standing in front of the Pike Place Market for both Saturday and Sunday. At the beginning,

when not many people had dropped by, a 50-year-old man with dark skin, a sluggish and unclean shirt, fleshy body, and a pair of unfocused eyes came up to me. He had read the sign that told him what our purpose was, and put a lot of strength just to open his mouth before a few words slipped out of his mouth: "What... are you doing this for?"

"We are from Tzu Chi, and we're doing this to help the earthquake victims in Taiwan," I said.

He nodded to us in a friendly way, "I... don't have any money with me, please wait, I'll be back..."

Swaying his big body, he went away into the shops. A few minutes later, he came back, went past us, heading to another shop, "please wait, I'll be back..."

I was going to thank him for doing all these because if you saw how hard it was for him to walk, you would understand how touched I already was. His kindness had already proved to us that he cared very much, and to me, it was already enough and too much to receive.

Soon he returned with a handful of changes. I showed him as much respect as I could, and almost wanted to drop my donation box to hug him, but I didn't (I'm not sure why I didn't). He went away with an expression as if regretting "that's as much as I could help." Almost everything and everyone around us was affected at that moment.

There came a young Japanese. A herd of older Japanese tourists followed him, and apparently he was having a fine tour of Seattle. All other tourists ignored Tzu Chi people, but this young guy looked at us and stopped. He looked at the group in front of him, seemed to be asking for permission for a short stop, but the group didn't notice him and kept walking. He and the group had already gone past us, but he decided to stop and returned with his wallet.

We got a dollar bill. And we got his heart. Returning to his group, his face told us as if he had done a very wonderful and meaningful thing during a trip to a strange country. Imagine if you, as a teenager, go to another country, say, Japan, China, or countries in Eu-

rope, for the first time in your life and see a total stranger, with a group you've never heard of, collecting money on the streets, will you make a donation?

I met a person on Sunday. He told us that he had donated yesterday when we asked for his help. He donated again, however. Soon I noticed this 30- to 40-year-old white man had no shoes, messy hair with a blond, short mustache, and a blue jean jacket. He was on a journey, had donated \$5 on Saturday, and again donated the only two \$1 bills he had with him. He will donate again if he gets any more money, he said. I don't know what journey he is on, but it must be a great one.

Now comes the fun part. Michael and I met a Turkish person. This man walked to us with his special Middle Eastern eyebrow and personality. "Who are you?"

"We're from Tzu Chi. We're trying to help the earthquake victims in Taiwan. Can you help?"

"I just want to know. How much money will go into the help?" (He was probably worried that his donation will not all go to the rescue mission I guess)

"Everything. Every dollar bill, every quarter, every cent."

"When the Turkey had an earthquake, where were you guys?"

"Well..." Michael and I went on to explain that we were there to help. We said that we had fund-raisers for the Turkey earthquake just a few weeks ago, and every penny went to help them. His face looked serious. Very serious. So serious that we started questioning ourself if we had really helped the Turkish when they needed it.

"Look at this!" He opened his mouth and showed his front teeth. "I am the earthquake survivor. I was there. I broke my tooth there..." Oh man, we really felt sorry about that.

"But how come I didn't get a PENNY from you guys?"

Gosh... This guy was here looking for trouble!! I started thinking if we should continue the senseless conversation.

He suddenly smiled. Then we all realized that he was joking. He put a \$1 bill into the box and said, "I just want to say, thank you very much for your help, and wish you the best."

A lot of people went past our spot, wondering about the credibility of Tzu Chi. And some of them, after gradually remembering the pictures they saw on TV and on newspapers, returned to help us. A young lady who just

## Your Happiness Brings Us Joy

Although it was only a simple one-syllable word, it brought us joy as if we had seen rain after a long drought.

By Shiang Tsai-rong, Northern California

Tr. by Laura & Emily Chen

"London Bridge is falling down, falling down, falling down," we screamed, and laughed happily. We held the children's hands tightly as we played "London Bridge is falling down." This was one of the children's favorite games. This was a person of the children's favorite games.

Since October 1998, the Tzu Chi in Northern California have visited handicapped children ranging in age from six to nine years old. With illnesses such as Down's syndrome, Autism, and Attention Deficit Disorder, the children are not able to lead normal lives or play games like other children their age.

I recall the first time we tried to play with them. They either shunned us out of fear or nervously pulled their hair. Some cried loudly for no apparent reason. Lacking experience in raising children, we were at a loss as to what to do. When we led them in playing games, we seemed to be playing with ourselves. When we taught them to draw, we had to hold their little hands for every line. When we asked them questions, it seemed that we were talking to ourselves because there was no response.

Gradually, we started to receive responses from them. One girl, who had never spoken a word before, spoke. She said, "Look" whenever she wanted us to watch an airplane in the sky. Although it was only a simple one-syllable word, it brought us joy as if we had seen rain after a long drought. Many of the boys stopped pulling their hair. They became increasingly talkative. After the game ended, they unwillingly kissed us goodbye because they did not want us to leave.

Growing up, we have all had the experiences of arguing with our parents. Often, we give them the cold shoulder for a few days in protest. Just the opposite, these children adore their parents. If they upset their parents, they will immediately hold their sad parents' hands and apologize for their behavior. Afterward, they will remain quiet without any more fuss.

Life may be easy for most of us. We often forget to be thankful for what we have. We are embarrassed upon seeing these kids. We are immersed in our parents' love. We enjoy good health. Yet, we make our parents worry about our behavior all the time. We should consider this: we are lucky to have our parents' love and the precious good health. Anything else that we own is extra, such as jewelry. We must be thankful and we must endeavor to repay our parents. Do not make our parents worry about us any longer.

These kids are very special. They are different from other kids in many ways. However, they are truly innocent, lovely, and well behaved. We have learned much from the misfortunes of their minds and bodies. We now hope that, with a little bit of effort, we may accompany them as they grow up.

came out of the flower shop with an armful of flowers, came to us and said, "I'm really sorry for what has happened," and donated. Another lady went past us and said, "Oooh, I'm really sorry about this. I don't have changes with me now; I'll be right back!" She returned with a man and her wallet. A bike-rider and several passers-by gave a handful of coins and said, "This is all I have."

From my heart, I'd like to show our appreciation to everyone for every penny he/she had helped, especially those not-so-rich or homeless people who had come to us. Some of them would forever remain in my mind.



A LA Tzu Chi Academy student blows out birthday candles under the blessings of her fellow classmates.

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