

THE HINDU

Online edition of India's National Newspaper
Monday, Sep 13, 2010

Metro Plus Chennai

Published on
Mondays,
Tuesdays,
Wednesdays,
Thursdays, Fridays
& Saturdays

Conversations with the self

Here's how you can tackle the feeling of resentment that grates from within

Photo: K.R. Deepak



Introspection The key to happiness

Have you ever felt resentful of people in your life, for no apparent reason? I have. Resentment largely comes from a state of feeling insignificant, sometimes purposeless and, most often, bored. This also comes from regret for not having what you think is rightfully yours. Paramount is the often unrecognised feeling of inadequacy.

Optimism, the key

Most often, this feeling comes from the slow but gradual acquisition of flaws that we collect during our growing-up years. In childhood, we are fundamentally optimistic.

Take a three-year-old, put him/her on a bicycle and see the child struggling to gain mastery, which it eventually does without losing heart. Yet, many of us later give up easily with little or no effort. We have systematically learnt to discredit all our efforts, so success seems unlikely.

It is also true that the elders in our life contribute much to these feelings. There is a study that says that by the time children are five, they have heard 431 times x 365 days x 5 years, a series of 'NOs', leaving them confused.

We often tell children "Don't do this, don't do that" — in effect, we systematically rob them of a chance to make decisions.

Respecting wishes

A child once visited a restaurant with her mother. The waiter at the restaurant came for the meal order. The child said it wanted a cola and an ice cream. The mother intervened and asked for a cup of warm milk.

The waiter returned with the cola and ice cream. The angry mother admonished the waiter, when the child interrupted and told her: "Please don't scold him. This is the first time I've been treated as an individual and my wishes respected."

Resentment also comes from self-rejection. This feeling of not being good enough comes from non-acceptance of who you are. The easy way to cope with it is to tell yourself that "It is all right to have such feelings; I am a good person", but the true challenge is to tell yourself that "I am good the way I am, and don't desire to be someone else".

Many say that if you accept what you are, you become complacent and don't strive for excellence. I don't agree. I often ask grown men: "As a child, did you wear trousers or shorts?" Most respond saying 'shorts'.

Then, I look at them and ask: "You now wear trousers. Who decided you should wear one? Life or you?" The answer is 'Life'. So, when you are ready to grow, life will nudge you forward.

Sometimes, resentment comes from feeling superior. Thus, you reject everything said to you and undermine the other. This feeling comes from lack of self-appreciation, the inability to cherish oneself and rejoice in that uniqueness.

Only when you learn to accept your innate goodness will you be liberated from the pettiness that corrupts your existence. And, accepting that you fell is an integral part of the climb to greatness.

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