

# Appreciation (3 of 5) Respect

May 24, 2023

## **SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

compassion

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This week we will continue to discuss the different aspects of appreciation. I think appreciation can be food for people. I think people benefit tremendously from being appreciated. I would say that a lot of people are not appreciated enough. When there is appreciation, something smiles inside, something lifts and delights. If we go a long time without appreciation, especially when we're doing something for others, something begins to sink. Something feels a little bit off and not quite right.

We live in a world where there's a mutual give and take that is a reference point we use for being with each other. We might have tremendous generosity in offering things to others. But if no appreciation or gratitude comes back, at some point the feeling of generosity begins to lessen. But if there is simple appreciation, where people understand what we're doing and value it – it could be a smile – we are happy to do it, and it may be easy to do it.

So appreciation is a really important ingredient of compassion, and appreciation has different elements to it. Today I would like to suggest that an important element is respect. As many of you know, I love the Latin root of the word, which means “to look again.” When we respect something, we are willing to take a respectful look again. We value something enough. We’re not afraid to look again. (That can happen.) When we respect it, we value it enough that it is something we want to be connected to, or to see, or to understand.

But respect carries much more. Respect carries the idea that the person we’re with has value, has worth. Respect means granting someone a certain degree of dignity. Many people in our society don’t feel valued. They feel marginalized, and they feel relegated to the edges, and maybe overlooked.

To overlook no one, to have everyone be worthy of being seen again, being seen clearly, appreciated, and valued – maybe more than valued: to delight in and to be grateful for them. Even if people don’t do anything for us, gratitude can simply mean that we are grateful to be delighted in another human being. We’re grateful for the chance to be connected with them or to see them.

All these ideas might seem as if we might not have time for this. They might seem a little bit superficial, or as if there are more important things to do, so maybe we can't stop and look again, and grant people dignity and value.

But I would like to propose that the source of respecting others is to respect oneself. To respect oneself is to value oneself. We value ourselves not because of what we are going to accomplish – so we have to do a lot – but we value something here that is present. We value ourselves in this present moment manifestation.

This is very important, because the future self may not exist at all. We don't know how long we're going to be alive. The future self might be very different from who you are today. Any ideas you have of a future self are just a prediction, a fantasy, an imagination. It might be a reasonable prediction, but we don't know. The past has receded into memory – maybe into the residue of past experiences in us. But the past itself is just a kind of virtual reality. And our memory of the past is not always accurate. It is frequently inaccurate. Sometimes it gets more accurate over time when a certain selection process and a certain kind of storytelling begin to shift and change.

The present moment is something very different from the past and the future – very different from fantasy. It is

the only place where our lived experience can be, and the only place where our lived humanity can manifest and be.

This is a very important time and place to experience life because everything else in life is not quite life. The past and the future are kind of virtual. Instead, be here. Respect what's here, and value these moments of consciousness. Value the heart beating, and value this chance to experience and be in this life. Value our well-being, and respect our autonomy, our dignity, and our efforts to try to make our way through this difficult life.

It might not always be easy to respect ourselves, but the more self-respect we have, the more respecting others carries value and strength in it. If we diminish our value, and offer respect and generosity to others kind of half-heartedly, on the sly, or on the side, that could be wonderful. But it might not be received as fully as it would be when a person shows up here completely. When we respect ourselves there is a fullness of embodiment: "Here I am." This person here, all of this person here, is present for you for a few moments with respect, with care, and with appreciation. That carries a lot more strength, and maybe more power and more value for the person to whom we offer respect and appreciation.

Having respect for oneself does not have to be an overly self-focused phenomenon. It is an important way of being that allows us to convey care and respect and love for others in a greater way. It is almost as if, if you want to love and care for others, begin by respecting yourself. A tremendous amount of healthy care for others comes along with that.

There can also be a lack of respect for others not because we disrespect ourselves, but because we don't think we have time to take care of ourselves. We don't have time to eat, sleep, exercise, and maybe meditate, so that the best of us is available to meet other people.

So respect is an important element of appreciation. At the minimum, this means knowing it's appropriate to bring our attention to really see and understand who is there. But respect also involves seeing people as valuable, as important – some people might say “precious.” Some people might say that others are treasures. We offer our wonderful love, appreciation, and delight not just to a lover or a family member, but we can offer it in appropriate ways even to strangers, and to people who are difficult in our lives. Sometimes offering respect and appreciation to people who are difficult – finding ways to appreciate and respect them – is the main ingredient in overcoming some of the conflicts we can be in.

Respect is a foundation. It is one of the foundational elements for being able to offer compassion in a full and effective way. If we offer compassion without respect, then we're in trouble. I think people can feel that, and then the compassion might not even be accepted, because the people somehow don't feel that they are recognized in any important way.

For some of us, the concept of respect as an ongoing orientation might not be familiar. It might not be something we do. But at least for today, until we meet again, maybe you can carry with you the notion of respect and see how that lives in you. Do you have respect for yourself? Do you have respect for others? If you were going to respect the people you are with, what form would it take that is appropriate for you? How do *you* embody respect? How does the movement of respect move through you in your own way?

For different people, different things might be considered respect. For you, what is a clean, healthy form of respect for yourself and others? What happens when you begin embodying that in your relationship with other people?

I use the word “embodiment” intentionally, to mean whole-heartedness, whole-body-ness, and wholeness. We bring ourselves into it in a fuller way than usual, so

the respect is intentional and purposeful, and really takes center stage for how we go about it.

I value very much that you're listening to this and maybe practicing with these things, and that I have a chance to teach them. Thank you. I look forward to continuing tomorrow.