**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.***