Self Respect Essay, Research Paper

Self-respect is essential to every human being. When a person is born, throughout his life he develops a certain degree of self-respect for himself. No one can teach him self-respect. Self-respect comes from within a person. He has to learn it for himself. Alfred Whitney Griswold put it best when he said,

Self respect can not be hunted. It can not be purchased. It is not for sale. It can never be fabricated out of public relations. It comes to us when we are alone, in quiet moments, in quiet places, when we suddenly realize that, knowing the good, we have done it; knowing the beautiful, we have served it; knowing the truth, we have spoken it. (Anand and Kulbir)

If a person does not have any self-respect they can not make any decisions for themselves. They will people pushed into situations they either do or don t want to do. People will also take advantage of them and eventually that person will end up being cheated. In life a person needs to develop a sense of self-respect for themselves in order to make decisions for themselves and be able to survive in this world.

To start lets define what exactly self-respect is. According to Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary the meaning of self-respect is regard for one’s own standing or position. A proper respect for oneself as a human being. Most of the time self-respect has a positive affect on a person but in some cases it can have a negative affect on an individual. For instance when a person keeps putting himself down and always thinks he cannot do something he develops a lower sense of self-respect. Eventually that person will think so low of himself he won t be able to function in life properly because he will be so depressed all the time. He will also be taken advantage of because he will not have enough respect for himself to say no to someone. He will start believing what he thinks is true even though it is not and often at sometimes hate himself and the world around him. Another way a person can loss self respect for himself is by listening to what other people have to say about him. If someone degrades a person who already has a low self-esteem that person might believe what that person says about him. Then that person will develop a low self of respect for himself. Didion points out that, To do without self-respect, on the other hand, is to be an unwilling audience of one to an interminable documentary that details one s failings, both real and imagined, with fresh footage spliced in for every screening. (216). Which means if he doesn t have respect for himself now, how will he have any respect for anything he does? As a result, anything he does will be wrong and result in a failure.

People with low or no self respect for themselves often tend to do what others tell them to do. As in George Orwell s, Shooting the Elephant the police officer did not want to kill the elephant he was persuaded by the Burmese people to shoot it. I had halted on the road. As soon as I saw the elephant I knew with perfect certainty that I ought not to shoot him. (Orwell 65) Orwell continues to say And suddenly I realized that I should have to shoot the elephant after all. The people expected it of me and I had got to do it; I could feel their two thousand wills pressing me forward, irresistibly. (65)

Here in the story the European police officer feels pressure and realizes that he will not have the strength to go against a large group of people who already dislike him. This is a good example of how a person who does not have a strong sense of self-respect would react. He would do what the crowd wanted him to do even though he knows its wrong and not ethical. He thought that it would be most beneficial to him to do what they wanted even though it wasn’t ethical.

A great philosopher from the past also had an idea like this. His name was Machiavelli and he didn t care at all about ethics. He thought that a person should do whatever it takes to become respected. Even if the decisions consist of doing something unethically, just as long as it keeps the crowds happy. Whatever the crowd wanted done, the prince would do just to gain their respect and honor. He believed that if a prince did something like this his people would love him and he would be able to stay in power. The people would honor and respect him as long as he did what they wanted done even if it consists of immoral decisions. Although this is a good approach there was another great philosopher who thought completely opposite of Machiavelli. This great man was Plato. Plato thought that in order to gain any kind of respect a person should be independent and fight for his decisions. Plato was a great philosopher who would die for his own beliefs. Plato also thought that a man would have respect and earn respect if he followed morals and ethics. He thought that a person would gain the most respect by just sticking to what he believes in and fighting for that belief as long as it is an ethical decision. Plato thought a person should never give in unless he heard all the different viewpoints and opinions.

If we look back to Orwell s decision making we realize that he went with the Machiavelli approach and did what the people wanted. Although he did use Plato s approach and think about some other outcomes to the situation if he did not shoot the elephant. He worries that if he does not shoot the elephant the Burmese people will have even less respect for him though. In the end the man really thinks of his self-respect and suggest that if anything went wrong the Burmese People would again laugh at him and this did not sit well with him.

He says For at that moment, with the crowd watching me, I was not afraid in the ordinary sense, as I would have been if I had been alone. A white man mustn’t be frightened in front of “natives”; and so, in general, he isn’t frightened. The sole thought in my mind was that if anything went wrong those two thousand Burmans would see me pursued, caught, trampled on and reduced to a grinning corpse like that Indian up the hill. And if that happened it was quite probable that some of them would laugh. That would never do. (Orwell 66)

Here it is clearly stated in the end that the police officer is more concerned with what the Burman people would think of him than, rather than following through with his original plans.

Being pushed into making decisions because someone has a little or no self- respect for himself is not the only thing that can happen to him. In serve cases a person could live their life like a hermit and avoid the whole world. Didion points out that people with low self-respect often alienate themselves from others. They become so paranoid about sharing their own feelings that they retroactively bottle all feelings up inside them self. (218)

In life a person needs a strong sense of self-respect for himself or herself in order to make good decisions for themselves. People should never sell out to other people s ideas so that they look better in their eyes. People should be true to themselves and never have to put on an act for someone. It may take a strong sense of self-respect to make the right decisions in life but down the line in life you will feel better about yourself if you always make the decisions you feel are right.

Works Cited

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