

Appreciation of Self, Others and Anything that is Beauty
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2 September 2019

Dear Fellow Colleagues, Students, Parents and Friends,

Welcome back after a long, wonderful and enjoyable school holiday! Hope you are all well and healthy, both physically and spiritually!

I remember that I have once shared a story about how we can make use of our strengths and improve our weaknesses in a teacher meeting last year. After rewriting it, I would like to share it with you at the commencement of the new year. Do hope that all readers might find some useful messages inside and can reflect on it:

A boy once asked his Martial Arts Master how he could play Kung Fu as excellent as his Master did.

The Master said, "Suppose you have two pockets in your trousers, one with a wallet, one with nothing. What is in your mind when you think about the two pockets?"

The boy said, "Of course, I shall keep my wallet safe and assure that it is always there."

The wise man replied, "The wallet represents your strengths, while the other pocket having nothing represents that you have weaknesses. If you take good care of your wallet, that means you always remember that you have strengths all the time, thus you decide to use your strengths to make things beautifully daily. That is good!" He paused and continued, "But if you forget to take note of the other wallet which stores your weaknesses, then it implies that you tend not to pay great attention to your weaknesses. When the sun goes down, your weaknesses are still there, accumulating day by day! You will get no achievement and feel very sorry for yourself at the end of the day." The boy looked at his Master curiously and asked, "Then how can I improve myself and become a professional Martial Arts Master like you?"

“Only focusing on your strengths but disregarding your weaknesses, your achievement will be very limited. Only focusing on your weaknesses but putting no emphasis on your strengths, you will spoil your whole life!” His Master shared slowly, but clearly, “Be sure to further enrich your strengths and continuously improve your weaknesses, then you will become great!” “Please appreciate what you have in hand! Remember to bring your strengths with you and fully utilise them to help or serve the people around you every day. Then you will be a great Master one day!”

The story above is actually based on the theory of self-concept and the constructive relationship between self-esteem and self-efficacy. According to the positive psychologists’ assertion (e.g. Marsh & Craven, 2005; Muijs, 1997), self-concept is derived from self-esteem and self-efficacy. There is a causal relationship between self-concept and students’ academic achievement. Everyone has a sense of self. Whether that sense of self is positive or negative is based upon one’s experiences in life and perceptions and assessment of oneself. In an academic context, self-representations (self-concept and self-esteem) are positively associated with academic achievement, motivation, and attitudes towards school. If a person has low self-esteem, the self-concept may be skewed in the direction of a negative description. And if he has a high self-esteem, his academic achievement will be relatively higher. In fact, people with a good self-esteem and self-efficacy are often able to recognise their limitations without a judgment attached.

As an implication to each of us in our daily life and school practices, whether or not we are teachers, students or parents, we should know ourselves very well. We should build up a healthy self-concept and we should learn how to appreciate what we have or have not, what we are strong at as well as what we have fallen short of. Once we have built up a positive identity of who and what we are, we can develop a more positive self-esteem. Consequently we can achieve the goals that we have planned.

Two years ago, we adopted “Kindness” as our key theme and emphasised on how we can care for others by sharing, giving and showing our love to our significant others and friends. Last year we changed our theme to “Hope”, reminding all of us to have hope and be kind to self as well as others, from individuals to community and the environment, from the living place we live to the country and the global world we belong.

This year, the theme is “Appreciation”. We want to inculcate the character strengths of “Appreciation of Beauty” (appreciate self, appreciate others, appreciate our past, the present and the unknown future, appreciate everything that is created surrounding us, e.g. the day and night, the creatures on earth, the environment, the nature, the school, the community, the country we belong and the global world and all kinds of people, etc.) deep into our hearts. Anything you can name, from as big as the universe to even a tiny little thing like the dust on earth, can be appreciated!

Each of your active participation in showing your “Appreciation” is key to the success of this campaign. Hope you can enjoy the new chapter of our schooling! Learn to appreciate and start appreciating today! Thank you!