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## **If We See It As A Gift**

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As pessimistic or as cynical as it might sound, and it is not meant to sound that way at all, most of what I have seen in life through my experiences has been seeing, meeting and interacting people who are not at ease with their life.

In saying that they were not "at ease", we say that there was some kind of dissatisfaction, suffering, an emptiness, a chronic fear or anxious state, anger or some feeling that revolved around looking at themselves in terms of a negative way, what we might term as being poor self-esteem.

We get to such a state through a variety of ways, some related to our environment and those around us, and much of it related to our own ignorance.

Growing up in the west or any other place can be fraught with many challenges and difficulties.

In wealthier countries, many of those difficulties have to do with the foolish, ignorant and abusive actions of others.

We may be bullied or made fun of at school, be neglected and ridiculed at home, and see the country and society that we live in as being one based on greed and selfishness.

In poorer countries these same things can occur, and they do, but there are the added burdens of living in a place where corruption is rampant, there are poor job opportunities, the health and education system may be lacking in many things, living conditions may be sub-standard and real poverty is always close at hand.

This writer had a chance to reflect on all of this recently when he was told that someone he had met briefly on a journey to Australia a few years back had committed suicide.

This man was young, nice, good-looking, healthy, had a good career, money in the bank and property, but still he thought that whatever he had was not enough.

When we see or hear about these things, we are always shocked or saddened, though it is not that uncommon.

Sadly, we do not always see our life as being a gift but instead see it in terms of what we do not have or have not achieved.

When we see life in those terms, we set up greater burdens and hurdles for us to deal with, and everything can become more troublesome.

And even if we have a lot of things that we can build a good life on, how we use our free time is really what may be the deciding factor.

Some year's back, while living in Austin, Texas, I used to go to a club where every night, after work, a young lawyer spent the evening drinking until he was drunk.

This use of his free time in this way certainly was not a way that would lead him to a better understanding and appreciation of the gifts that he had.

In our free time, we need to have something that can take a lot of work, effort, patience and understanding to get, that being, a happy and satisfying home life.

Sometimes we think that such a life is one where we have unending sex at home while others see it as something where we communicate well with our loved ones and we are all healthy.

If we live alone or are alone at home, we have to work harder to make ourselves feel comfortable with ourselves, whether we are a man or a woman.

If we start to see our being alone as a real burden or think that we are unworthy of the love of another because of it, we can be heading down the road to a real problematic existence.

It is easy to say that we should look at life as a gift, and that should be enough to get us from a disturbed and depressed state, but that is not practical.

And life at home for many can consist of a routine that may not be very healthy.

Many people are spending too much time watching television during their free time.

And when we turn off the television or DVD player, the aloneness hits us again.

We benefit when we can set some sort of schedule as to how we are going to use our free time.

Some may criticize this as being too regimented or lacking spontaneity or even being not enjoyable, but it does give us a focus for our free time and energy.

Any kind of habitual use of drugs or drinks is dangerous and debilitating, creating conditions for mood and energy swings that can make things worse.

If we practice Yoga or Buddhism, they provide us with ways to use our free time that are very enjoyable and enhance who and how we are.

Meditation practice can quiet, focus and steady the consciousness, while posture practice can release tension in the body, give us more energy and can serve as an excellent way to improve our performance in some other sport or activity, such as swimming, the martial arts or playing basketball, football or baseball.

Perhaps what we need to be mindful about is to use our free time in ways that are constructive.

If we do that we may be able to think that life is great and with the feeling and experience, see it as the gift that it is.

And from that realization, perhaps we will build on it in ways both as an individual and in our actions with others that are truly loving, compassionate and fruitful.

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