



# LIVING VALUES

an educational program

## Tolerance

*Through understanding and open-mindedness,  
a tolerant person attracts someone different,  
and by genuinely accepting and accommodating that person,  
demonstrates tolerance in practical form.*

Tolerance



**T**he world - our extended family of people - can be depicted as a large tree with many limbs, branches, and shoots. Each nation - represented by a limb - is a brother or a sister having families of their own. Those families - represented by branches - are the various provinces and communities made up of all religions and ethnic groups. When the roots of history are seen by placement of family members on such a genealogical tree, that perspective shows complementarity among all people and demonstrates that coexistence is possible. Since the tree takes sustenance from common, original roots which grew from one seed, the human family tree can be no different. Coexistence stems from the very seed from which life sprang! And tolerance, which also develops from that one seed, not only has roots which run deep and which sustain, but also expresses itself in other diverse ways, including enriching the soil and providing showers of acceptance and support.

## Coexistence

The aim of tolerance is peaceful coexistence. While tolerance recognizes individuality and diversity, it removes divisive masks and defuses tension created by ignorance. It provides opportunity to discover and remove stereotypes and stigmas associated with people perceived to be different because of nationality, religion, or heritage. Just as a gardener recognizes characteristics of each variety of seed and prepares the grounds accordingly, a tolerant person takes into consideration the uniqueness of all people. Through understanding and open-mindedness, a tolerant person attracts someone different, and by genuinely accepting and accommodating that person, demonstrates tolerance in practical form. As a result, relationships blossom.

The seed of tolerance, love, is sown with compassion and care. The more one becomes loving and shares that love, the greater the power in that love. When there is lack of love, there is lack of tolerance. For instance, the example of mother and child: When an obstacle comes to a child, because the mother has love for that child, she is prepared to and has the power to tolerate anything. At that time, she does not worry about her own well-being but uses love to confront all circumstances. Love makes anything easier to tolerate.

Family is the first classroom to learn tolerance, as there is always some adjustment to be made to accommodate others. School is the second classroom. However, tests of tolerance are taken each and every day of one's life. Those who pass most often have the consciousness of appreciating the good in people and in situations. Those receiving lower marks usually have shades or degrees of disapproval. And those who pass with honor use the power of tolerance as a shield of protection so that internal serenity remains untouched.

## Discrimination in Decision-Making

Tolerance is inner strength which enables the individual to face and transform misunderstandings and difficulties. The method for that is first to use discrimination in decision-making. By delving into the conscience, one can determine what is right or wrong; what will bring benefit or loss; and what will bring short- or long-term attainment.

Insightful decisions result. The power of decision-making eliminates upheaval in the mind and intellect as well as between emotion and reason. There is neither conflict within the self nor with others, since tolerance cultivates the ability to cool the strong and heated feelings of others. Even if insults were thrown, there would not be the slightest sign of wilting visible on the face. Knowledge and insight automatically raise the protective shield of tolerance so that the individual stays full and content and not threatened by people or circumstance. A tolerant person is like a tree with an abundance of fruits. Even when pelted with sticks and stones, the tree gives its fruit in return.

In official and professional settings, the fruit of one's intentions and actions can be damaged if- when interacting with colleagues - the protective canopy of tolerance does not shade the tree. Those who have the power to tolerate do not allow negative external vibrations to cloud their minds and cause doubt and discontentment. There is inner contentment. They are able to see things as they are rather than what they appear to be and to take necessary action.

## Ability to Accommodate

Certain circumstances often demand tolerance. Extremities of seasons and varying levels of bodily pain are cases in point. The artisans of science and technology have been invaluable in assisting human beings to accommodate extreme heat and cold, and advanced medical treatment has done wonders in helping individuals tolerate pain. Yet, such benefits do not mean that discomfort is eliminated completely. At some level for all, and for some more so than others, tolerance becomes an indispensable power to cope.

Tolerance develops the ability to accommodate the problems of everyday living. The hundreds of people who rush to the train station after a hard day's work may be tired and weary. Their accommodation skills are tested when the announcement is heard: "All trains have been cancelled due to technical difficulties with the lines. Passengers are requested to use alternative routes." To tolerate life's inconveniences is let go, be light, make others light, and move on. Mountains are made into molehills, and molehills are made into mustard seeds!

---

**"Tolerance is not concession, not indifference. Tolerance is the knowledge of the other. It is mutual respect through mutual understanding. Let's throw out the old myths and take up the results of current research. Man is not violent by nature. Intolerance is not 'in our genes.' Fear and ignorance are the root causes of intolerance, and its patterns can be imprinted on the human psyche from an early age."**

**Mr. Federico Mayor,  
Director-General of UNESCO,  
A Year for Tolerance, 1995**