

Self Discipline - One person's thoughts

Mind training, self awareness, patience, self control - these and most other practices cannot easily succeed without self-discipline. Like many, I came from a less than ideal background where self control was not understood, practiced nor valued. Along the way, a few kind friends encouraged me to practice, what is essentially self-discipline. My best friend taught me the value of education, my first girlfriend how to save money and my sweet Mother how to value people.

Self-discipline, along with some fortunate circumstances brought me a moderate level of personal success. Over the years, I grew increasingly lazy and forgot the key ingredient that had shaped my past. Lately, times have not been as generous. I have had to struggle instead of merely coast. I needed to reflect, recollect and act.

In the most advanced state, self-discipline ensures that our will produces the best possible result. Without it, our existence becomes one of hopeless dependence and degeneration.

I am trying to instil the values of self discipline in my children. This goal and other life circumstances led to a kind of psychological renaissance and a much deeper appreciation of self-discipline. I have read about the practice and philosophy as widely as I can. Many thinkers encourage an attitude of vigilant, mindful responsibility for ones own actions and results. We need to understand where to improve and to constantly strive for a more balanced and complete self control. Even if we are poor materially, self-discipline can be used to improve our minds and our general situation.

I am the father of two young children. I try to teach my children any root behaviours that can improve their entire lives. Self-discipline is the most important one I can think of.

I can offer no more precious gift. My energetic six year old son is bright but undisciplined. One afternoon recently, after exercising with him, he was quiet and receptive, so I had a chance to explain self-discipline to him and the benefits of practicing it. I was thrilled to see it dawn on him and he started giving me examples. It was one of the most rewarding moments I can remember.

The practice involves a continuous cultivation of not only mindfulness but disciplined action. Each of us is at a different place in our development of self control, but we all have something to build on. Practicing self-discipline constantly is like developing a good habit or like muscle building. It may be hard at first, but it is a practice which is self-reinforcing. It has a strong component of

mindfulness as we need to seek an ongoing awareness of ones body, speech, mind, surroundings and especially their relation to other beings. We pursue an attitude of constant improvement and a sense of honour and duty.

It is not necessary to be austere and uncompromising with ourselves and others. For example, there is little gain in exercising ourselves to the point of injury. That is not the middle way. Balance and restraint are also an important part of self-discipline.

All of us should seek humility about our own abilities and longevity, and be motivated to act decisively and for our greater good. Time will pass and our lives will end - whether or not we accomplish anything worthwhile. Now is our chance to act for the benefit of ourselves and others. There will definitely be a time that will not offer the same opportunity.

Some giants of the past had this to say about self discipline:

"It is better to conquer yourself than to win a thousand battles. Then the victory is yours. It cannot be taken from you, not by angels or by demons, heaven or hell". – **Buddha**

"Discipline is the soul of an army. It makes small numbers formidable, procures success to the weak, and esteem to all." – **George Washington**

"I count him braver who overcomes his desires than him who conquers his enemies, for the hardest victory is over self." – **Aristotle**

By Orgyen Osel Wangpo