



Excerpt

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Chapter 3

Developing Self-Awareness

Learning to understand our own emotions is the first step to finding inner peace and stillness, and to learning to love and care for ourselves. These abilities are essential if we are to manage our stress, build a healthy self-esteem, follow our dreams, develop meaningful relationship and become effective, contributing and caring members of our communities, and achieve a significant degree of happiness

Unfortunately, our culture today encourages us to look outside of ourselves for our gratification and happiness. As we try to satisfy our needs with 'things' and external 'quick fixes', we only want more, perpetuating an endless cycle of desire. This can never completely satisfy or fulfill us, for we are placing our confidence in everything but our 'self', when what we really need is the rudimentary but unshakeable confidence (self-confidence) that comes only with self-knowledge and care and knowing we can handle what life has to offer.

The earlier a child begins to develop this awareness of self and an understanding of his emotions, the less likely he will be to look 'outside' for gratification. The younger a child is when she learns to love and care for herself, the stronger this self-love, and love for others, will be in adult years. Very young children are often reflective and have a sense of stillness and contemplation. As soon as a child has reconnected with the joy and pleasure of inner peace and reflection, he will have a coping skill for life that is immeasurable in value.

You can use the following story to illustrate.

Find more stories in the audio section of our website.

The Precious Stone

A Tale from India

It was dusk and the air was still, as the wandering holy man settled under a tree, near the big rock, beside the path, at the foot of the mountain. There he would spend the night, with a stone for a pillow. He had few belongings and had long ago given up the idea of becoming successful, or making a lot of money or even becoming very popular. He had whatever he needed and he needed very little. He had left the world in order to find himself without it. His evening meditation was disturbed by the shouts of a business who came running up to him in an agitated state, "It must be you, I'm sure it must be you!" he blurted out. "I had a dream last night telling me to come to this tree, near the big rock, beside the path, at the foot of the mountain. Here a wandering holy man would give me a precious stone and I would be rich forever!"

"I've been looking for you all day!" he added. "Searching, searching, searching. I'm so glad now that I've found you!"

"Perhaps this jewel is the stone from your dream," said the holy man, rummaging in his bag and pulling out a sparkling rock. "I happened to see it on the path. Do take it."

The businessman's mouth dropped open in amazement and his eyes grew large with delight. He had never seen such a huge diamond, and never even dreamed that a diamond could be so enormous. As he carried it away to his home he glowed with satisfaction and fulfillment. His long day of searching had not been in vain. But the feeling did not last very long and by the end of the evening he was deeply troubled. He tossed and turned all night and couldn't get to sleep. He wanted to plan what he would do with his new riches, and how he would enjoy all his new possessions and wealth, and all the new opportunities life now had in store for him. But he couldn't get the wandering holy man out of his mind, what had happened that day and what it might all mean.

Before dawn broke he got up and went back to the tree, near the big rock, beside the path, at the foot of the mountain. Disturbing the holy man's morning meditation, he laid the diamond before him. And he asked, "Please, can I have the precious gift that made you give away this stone?"