

Setting Priorities in our Life

Experiences in Ongoing Education

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- Preliminary Draft -

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„Learning is like rowing against the current – as soon as you stop, you will drift back.“

(Benjamin Britten, 1913-1976, British composer)

“The smarter person gives in. Unfortunately, but true! It is the base for stupidity’s reign in the world.”

(Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, 1830-1916, Austrian author)

Based on these quotes, I would like to comment on the following three points by sharing some of my own experiences:

1. The importance of life long learning and making effort to cultivate our own self
2. The importance of putting our knowledge into practice for the greater good
3. The importance of setting priorities as women in certain periods of life

Ad 1. The joy of gaining knowledge:

Life is all about growing and learning, from the very first breath we take...

a) Intellectual competence: Being a book freak, intellectual learning has always been an essential part of my life. Knowledge is like food for the mind, if you don’t get it, you starve.

b) Social and cultural competences: Wherever I went in the world, I learned languages and took a keen interest in the cultures where I lived (Japan, Korea, USA, Yemen, Peru). 9 years in Yemen were especially valuable to get to know Islamic culture and make bridges of peace. There, I also started writing and publishing, which I enjoy as much as reading.

c) Psychological competence: Learning about the nature of the soul was also a vital part of my life – working consciously on one’s own growth, healing the inner child, balancing emotions and relationships.

d) Spiritual and heartistic competence: Knowledge of the heart is the most important kind of learning which has the power of balancing all the other. We must tap the reservoir of God’s love and set our inner compass in the right direction.

- All these forms of learning take effort, one must constantly “row against the tide” (Benjamin Britten) of laziness and indulgence. Self cultivation is the first step in making peace.

Ad2. The joy of acting in your social environment:

a) Overcoming limitations: I used to be very introverted and shy and had to overcome fears of speaking in public or even to take part in larger discussion groups. But overcoming obstacles makes you strong and gives you satisfaction. I took chances to give talks and improve myself. (Sometimes feelings of fear reveal what you need to do..! The same can be true for feelings of envy..!)

b) Teaching: So I learned the joy of teaching, sharing knowledge with others and multiplying it.

c) Taking social responsibility: You are responsible for what you know. (That’s why many people prefer to stay blind...! But ignorance is no excuse, even with regards to laws!) Knowledge involves

social responsibility – we should push for what is right and not leave the world in the “reign of stupidity” (Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach). We shouldn’t stay in the “ivory tower” and watch the world go down! However, alone, each one has little power - we need co-fighters!

d) Networking: Being already active with several organisations, I started networking with other family oriented organizations (Familiennetzwerk). I realized how active they are to spread their knowledge and beliefs and push for changes in the political and social environment. However, when I met people at large conferences and joined in working groups, I strongly felt my own limitations in the academic and scientific field. People tend to listen more to experts than to common people, because experts have gained expertise by studying a subject thoroughly and they use specific language specific to communicate.

Ad3. The joy of living all your dreams:

a) Dreams show you the way: This feeling of limitation and lack coincided with a life-long dream of mine: to study at a university and raise my educational level to become more professional in what I want to do: So, last year, I started to study Psychology at a correspondence university (Fernuniversität in Hagen). I am so excited to be a real student now. I enjoy learning! Believe it or not - my brain still works and even improves by using it! And I found a group of other women who also study part time like me. We regularly meet and have a lot of fun, and we support each other with exams and keeping it all up.

b) Timing and life span: But why study at the age of 53? It is a result of setting my priorities in life. I found God early in my life and dedicated many years to a spiritual mission. Then I married and raised four lovely children and also have a part-time job, working together with my husband from our home office. But one dream never died in me: to do formal studies and get a university degree. I have read bulks of books in my life, but formal studies are different - more structured and comprehensive and most of all: officially recognized. Doing studies at my age has the advantage that all my life experiences can flow into it – I have a different perspective now than I had in my youth!

c) Priorities: There is a time for everything. Fulfilling all your dreams at once can spoil the result and create stress and disharmony – in yourself and in people around you. When my children were small, I dedicated my full time and a lot of creative energy into them. To me, there is nothing more wonderful than to experience love in the family, to have a good husband-wife relationship and nurture your own children and watch them grow. I even feel this is a prerequisite if you want to bring peace to society: to “heal and strengthen your families and then show the world the way” (Mrs. Moon).

d) Find your own calling: I am a family person. My main profession has been housewife and mother for many years. You can also call it “family manager”, a job that is so vital for society but is not recognized highly at all. I suffered a lot from this. Now I study psychology because I want to know more about human nature and be able to tell people in scientific language what I know is true on the spiritual level: that love is the most important aspect in life and that the family, the prime “school of love”, is the social institution that has to receive utmost care and support from society. Also I want to gain consultative or therapeutic skills to help other people in managing their families well.

e) Learning how to play the game: To be recognized and heard in this world, you have to know how the “game is played”. What do those scientific studies that people cite really say? How are data collected and what flaws and hidden agendas can be detected in their make-up? What is science all about and how is research being done and communicated? Presently, I learn all about social research and statistics, which is the basis of decision making in politics and the economy. In the first period of my studies, I learned about philosophies and theories of science. And in the future, I will learn about

the latest research in the field of neurological science and in developmental psychology, among many other topics. By the way: one big topic in developmental psychology is “life long learning”.

Outlook:

So, in conclusion: If we learn the skills the world uses, if we speak the language people know, we can be recognized and succeed in bringing peace and justice into each field of society by setting the priorities right. How can we voice our opinion? In this regard, each woman has her own unique way and skills.

One of my favored ways is publishing. I want to write books, because I know there are people out there who learn from books just as I do. And there is an intelligent and heartistic spiritual force in the universe, God, who is guiding people to find the stuff they need to develop their knowledge and become wise.

Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach believed that she could change the world by bringing in new thoughts. Back in the 19th century, in a time, when women could do little to move society, she became an author, writing drama and novels. Over the years, she became quite renowned in Austria and Germany and was the first woman to be granted an honorary doctorate from the University of Vienna.