

Tolerant

To be tolerant is to put up with other people, whether or not they are particularly sympathetic to us. The tolerant person will be easy with the guy in the bus who sits next to him with a bad cold, with the missionary activist who gets his shoe in the door during dinner time, or with the little kid squalling in the next door motel room. Tolerance is a useful virtue in a crowded world where few of us can have things just as we want them.

Examples

1 An experienced woman

A certain woman I know is very tolerant. Since she emigrated to the United States from a country in Africa, she has been under pressure from her family 'back home' to support them in various ways, chiefly financial, but also by invitations to visit her new country. She had not expected this onslaught, but has managed to survive it, and to sustain relationships of value to her, by a process of patient explanation, and by keeping herself judiciously unavailable when the pressure heats up. The sources of her tolerance, which has grown, are prayer, reflection on wisdom literatures that are fundamental to her, and an ability to put grudges behind her. She has gained a tolerance, for pressures within family structures, that has made her a deep judge of human nature and a prudent guide toward social behaviors. All who are around her have profited from her learning.

2 Tolerance of criticism

I have grown more tolerant, with age, in dealing with criticism. Some people like your work, some do not. It is common, in the writing business, to feel resentful of those who criticize your work. You know this is not smart of you. A fairly extensive review, of my translations and my writings on translation, dismissed much that I valued on the ground that it was elitist and not sufficiently melodious. I had two careful answers, deep inside me, to both these points, and those answers immediately leapt to my mind. I thought the reviewer was one SOB. I kept that opinion for a while, and can still bring it to mind, but I have since come to see just what the reviewer meant, and what I could learn from his point. I have subsequently written a number of things that are better for having been criticized. In the process, fortunately, I have become more tolerant of people who help me to think critically about what I do.