

Minister's Article for July, 2024

"The heart is like a garden. It can grow compassion, fear, resentment or love.

What seeds will you plant?" - Buddha

There are countless places to pursue one's mediation practice. The Department of Motor Vehicles is one. The doctor's office is another.

Once, while seated in a waiting room at a dentist's office, I was so unaware of what was happening in the lobby that I hadn't noticed the actions of an irritated receptionist. When it was my turn, she pointed at me and said, "You there. Get over here right now." As I walked to her desk, she said, "I don't have all day." I sat down in the seat across from her.

She asked me the usual questions, but she barked each time she opened her mouth. "I need your address...did you hear me? What's your name...spell it? Where do you work...give me the phone number?" Remaining calm, I watched her closely as she wrote my answers on a sheet of paper. She was a tense ball of rubber bands, ready to explode and ping in all directions. The lines on her dark forehead were numerous and there were deep bluish circles under her eyes.

After completing three forms, she got up to get something from another area behind a wall. A woman in the waiting room crept up behind my chair and whispered, "That receptionist is being mean to you. You shouldn't let her talk to you like that." The receptionist came back into the room and the woman behind me quickly crept back to her seat. (I guess she didn't want the angry person to bark at her too.)

As the receptionist shuffled papers, I asked, "How is your day going?" She stopped, put both elbows on the desk and placed her hands over her face. She took a deep breath for a few seconds. I think all of us in the room were grateful for a moment of blessed peace and quiet.

Suddenly, she slammed her hands on the desk and said, "Go back to your seat...I'll call you when it's time for you to see the dentist. Go, now, get back to your seat." I did what I was told and sat down in the first seat near the door. The woman in the waiting room scooted over to me and whispered, "Why didn't you tell her to stop being mean to you?" I sighed and said, "She is the one having a bad day. I'm doing very well, thank you."

I never found out why the receptionist suffered. It's still a mystery. And, I can't say all my encounters with people who act like bullies go so well. But that day was a pivotal point in time for me. I had two profound realizations. The actions of others, much of the time, have nothing to do with me and I don't have to let the negativity of another person grow in my garden of calm self-restraint.

I hope your inner garden grows rows and rows of love and compassion. And may you reap the benefits of deflecting moments of negativity.

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