

Reflections on Relationship

Blaming Never Helps

When you plant lettuce, if it does not grow well, you don't blame the lettuce. You look into the reasons it is not doing well. It may need fertilizer, or more water, or less sun. You never blame the lettuce. Yet if we have problems with our friends or family, we blame the other person. But if we know how to take care of them, they will grow well, like lettuce. Blaming has no positive affect at all, nor does trying to persuade using reason or arguments. That is my experience. No blame, no reasoning, no argument, just understanding. If you understand, and you show that you understand, you can love and the situation will change.

One day in Paris, I gave a lecture about not blaming the lettuce. After the talk, I was doing walking meditation by myself, and when I turn the corner of a building, I overheard an eight-year-old girl telling her mother, "Mommy, remember to water me. I am your lettuce." I was so pleased that she had understood my point completely. Then I heard her mother reply, "Yes, my daughter, and I am your lettuce also. So please don't forget to water me too." Mother and daughter practicing together, it was very beautiful.



Understanding

Understanding and love are not two things, but just one. Suppose your son wakes up one morning and sees that it is already quite late. He decides to wake up his younger sister, to give her enough time to eat breakfast before going to school. It happens that she is grouchy and instead of saying, "Thank you for waking me up," she says, "Shut up! Leave me alone!" and kicks him. He will probably get angry, thinking, "I woke her up nicely. Why did she kicked me?" He may want to go to the kitchen and tell you about it or even kick her back.

But then he remembers that during the night sister coughed a lot, and he realizes that she must be sick. Maybe she behaved so meanly because she has a cold. At that moment, he understands, and he is not angry at all anymore. When you understand, you cannot help but love. You cannot get angry. To develop understanding, you have to practice looking at all living beings with the eyes of compassion. When you understand, you cannot help but love. And when you love, you naturally act in a way that can relieve the suffering of people.



Real Love

We really have to understand the person we want to love. If our love is only a will to possess, is not love. If we only think of ourselves, if we know only our own needs and ignore the needs of the other person, cannot love. We must look deeply in order to see and understand the needs, aspirations, and suffering of the person we love. This is the ground of real love. You cannot resist loving another person when you really understand him or her.

From time to time, to close to the one you love, hold his or her hand, and, ask, "Darling, do I understand you enough? Or am I making you suffer? Please tell me so that I can learn to love you properly. I don't want to make you suffer, and if I do so because of my ignorance, please tell me so that I can love you better, so that you can be happy." If you say this in a voice that communicates your real openness to understand, the other person may cry. That is a good sign, because it means the door of understanding is opening and everything will be possible again.

Maybe a father does not have time or is not brave enough to ask his son such a question. Then the love between them will not be as full as it could be. We need courage to ask these questions, but if we don't ask, the more we love, the more we may destroy the people we are trying to love. True love needs understanding. With understanding, the one we love will certainly flower.



from Peace Is Every Step by Thich Nhat Hanh (NY: Bantam Books, 1991)

The Christmas Story

The Christmas story told by children from
St Paul's Church in New Zealand.

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/kWq60oyrHVQ?rel=0>