

Confucius Teachings On Building A Happy Life (22)

- a foundation for Mahayana Buddhism practice

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The Art of Dress

Hello my friends! We have just mentioned, "I must wear my hat straight and make sure to button my clothes. And my socks and shoes should also be worn neatly and correctly."

It's rather important for a person to maintain a dignified appearance. When you attach importance to grooming, people will respect you even more. But if we wear unusual and outlandish clothing, not only will other people despise us, we are more likely to create a bad social atmosphere. The clothes of many public figures are particularly important. If they wear very revealing clothes, they may leave a bad atmosphere in society. Public figures must carefully think about their influence on the entire society; they should be more cautious with their behavior. Additionally, parents' clothing is also an example for children. If a mother's clothing is too revealing, her children will be subconsciously influenced since childhood and also wear revealing outfits in the future. This is very bad for her because many people will treat her lightly. It will even put her in danger. So, one must not be imprudent in one's dress.

People's clothing will indeed affect their inner state. For example on certain important occasions, there are rules that require you to wear formal attire before you can join these functions. Some grander performances will also have the same requirements. For example, what should we wear when we go to a cultural center? We must look neat and dignified. Then, we'll be more focused when we go to watch the program. If we wear sandals or shorts to the performance, that would be very inappropriate. So, when our attire is neat, we will be respectful too. When we go hiking, can we wear like what I'm wearing now? That would be improper too. Since we ought to feel relaxed when hiking, we should wear the right attire at this time.

There was a tactful salesman in the marketing industry named George Lard. He was very good at selling cars. Once, while he was sleeping, he suddenly woke up and quickly ran towards the mirror to put on his suit and tie. Then, he started respectfully making calls to his customers. After talking to his clients, he hung up the phone, immediately unfastened his tie, took off his suit, and went back to sleep. Seeing this, his wife said, "Are you crazy?" George Lard explained to her, "Even though my client can't see my appearance, I will talk frivolously if I am dressed casually and my customer will be able to sense it." If I'm very cautious and wear my well-ironed suit like this, such a respectful attitude will be passed to him through my speech."

It's true that a person's clothing will also influence his state of mind. Of course, when he has developed this habit, he would definitely be respectful whenever he met his customers because he could maintain the same respect even in their absence. This is called "being consistent in word and deed." Many college graduates who went for job interviews were often rejected. Teacher Yang has also encountered many talented graduates who failed to obtain employment. Later, after Teacher Yang gave them some guidance on their clothing, they managed to obtain jobs. So, even if a person is very talented, he may very likely miss out on this opportunity if he dresses improperly for the interview.

The Foundation for Management Skills

Let's look at the next phrase:

"I will always place my hat and clothes away in proper places; I will not carelessly throw them around for that will get them dirty."

Clothes, hats, and everything we use daily should be placed in their proper places. Don't scatter them everywhere as doing so will make things get dirty very fast. When you don't cherish your belongings, their lifespan will be shortened too. Even though these items are lifeless, if you treat them with love and care, they can last longer. As the saying goes, "Those who love people will always be loved by people; and if you cherish your belongings, they will respond to you likewise." If you gorge yourself on eating and drinking everyday, how long can your stomach last? Perhaps it will "go strike" in thirty or forty years. If you treat it very respectfully by adhering to three regular and moderate meals a day, your stomach will repay you accordingly and can last very long. So, we must cherish all things.

When everything has its proper place, your life will become orderly and systematic.

Let's observe children nowadays, or even some adults like myself and some classmates and siblings, when we can't find something, such as our workbook, we would turn the house upside down looking for it until we lost our temper. Who were we angry with? With ourselves. When we got angry, we also spoiled the whole family's atmosphere.

A little carelessness may result in unworthy consumption of our time and energy. When this good habit isn't formed, and you join the workforce in the future, you might subconsciously misplace the company's very important contract. After three days you would forget about it. If you failed to find the lost document, you might be unable to keep your job. So indeed, these life habits will influence a person for a lifetime.

Once, there was a child who never swept the floor at home. There was an elder who went to his house and said, "This floor is so dirty, why don't you clean it?" He replied, "I am saving my hand for 'sweeping the world.'" Wasn't he boastful? Many children also say that they want to become a high official or successful entrepreneur in the future, but their rooms are very messy. So, this elder said to him, "How can you sweep the world when you can't even sweep your own house?" He couldn't even clean his own house, how would he be able to sweep the world? Likewise, if children can't even keep their house tidy and clean, how could they become an entrepreneur when they grow up? Is that possible? It's impossible.

Dizigui is also a study in management; it's a basic management lesson. When should children start cultivating this orderly and systematic habit? From an early age! Don't keep thinking that they will acquire this habit when they pursue a business management course in the future. When an MBA graduate comes for a job interview but his house and room are very dirty and messy, would you appoint such a person? Yes or no? It's evident that whatever he learned from the management course is only theories and isn't practical.

Uncle Lu once told me that when he went to inspect the branch offices, he would surely check if the branch directors' desks were tidy and clean and whether they had archived the files properly. If they failed to handle these small matters systematically and orderly, it would be very difficult for them to follow the rules of certain jobs at the company. "Small details are actually a great learning." From these small areas and actions, we can tell if a person's mind is calm or very restless.

So, my friends, your children's ability in dealing with people and matters must be nurtured from childhood. Because some successful entrepreneurs have piercing eyes; they can immediately know your child's management abilities at a glance. There is no way for you to deceive them. Many people think that they can find a very good job with their post-secondary educational background. If they can hardly conduct themselves and handle matters properly, they will definitely not be recruited by these outstanding entrepreneurs. If they were hired, it must be that those entrepreneurs are not very sophisticated. What would happen to this company? It wouldn't be able to survive very long either. So, in order for your children to work in a very promising company in the future, you must help them build this foundation properly now.

Why do I have such deep awareness? I remember when I was in Australia, for several weeks we were assigned to wash the dishes and cooking utensils for 60 to 70 people, the cooking pots were this deep and wide because nearly one hundred people ate there everyday. In all my life, I only started washing dishes when I was there. While I was washing the dishes, I suddenly came to realize one philosophy of life: we can never escape from our destined tasks in life. So my friends, when should we do our destined work?

The Infinite Life Sutra states, "Why don't we diligently cultivate goodness while we are still young and healthy?"

We must do more and contribute more when we are young, only then will the blessings and fortune manifest in our old age. If you're not industrious while young and often squander away your time, you will certainly be very miserable in your old age. Since we can't escape from our tasks, we should seriously do them while we're young and able. So, I happily washed the dishes then. One day, Uncle Lu happened to come into the kitchen. At first, he was just walking past but suddenly he stopped and said to me, "Seeing how you wash the dishes, I can tell that you're very fortunate." You see, my background had been revealed through my clumsy dish washing. So my friends, this incident has made me realize that you can't hide the truth from a truly wise elder.

When your child is humble and respectful to others and is very hardworking, you don't have to worry that he won't be promoted in the future; you can rest assured. "I will always place my hat and clothes away in proper places; I will not carelessly throw them around for that will get them dirty." When a person can lead an orderly and systematic life,

wisdom will constantly arise amidst his calm mind. Just like when a lake is very tranquil without waves, it can reflect the surroundings very clearly.

While I was in Australia, I once went to Uncle Lu's room and it happened that he wanted to get his clothes. Because the bed was hollow inside, clothes could be kept in it. When he pulled up the mattress, I suddenly saw the clothes inside were arranged like in a Giordano store. They were neatly folded like the clothes displayed in the store. So, when everything is so neatly arranged and well placed, we can immediately get something whenever we want to use it. When our mind is calm and undisturbed at all times, we'll be able to handle matters systematically and orderly. So, this habit is rather important. We must first set an example and further guide our children to develop this good practice.

The Essential Function of Clothing

Let's look at the next phrase and recite it once: "When it comes to clothes I will value tidiness, not how fancy they are. I will wear clothes according to my social status and suitable to my family's position. When it comes to eating and drinking, I will not be picky; I will only eat the right amount and will not overeat. While still young, I won't drink alcohol. Being drunk is most ugly."

"When it comes to clothes I will value tidiness, not how fancy they are. I will wear clothes according to my social status and suitable to my family's position." I once heard an elder say that before he got married, he thought it should be very easy to support a wife because she would only eat a little. After marrying her, he felt it was very difficult to support her. Because although food is cheap, clothes are very expensive. He said that when he went shopping with his wife, his wife would say, "Buy it, buy it!" But he would say, "Nah! Nah!" Later, he came to understand one truth: there's always one dress missing in a woman's wardrobe. Actually, the most important purpose of wearing clothes is to keep us warm and cover our body. It's definitely not used to show off or for vanity's sake.

People tend to forget the essence of things. For example, a professor took dozens of cups to his class, because he knew that his students would be thirsty after two lectures. He took out the cups and said, "Students, you can come and get a drink now." Since everyone was thirsty, drinking water should have been the foremost objective, right? But when the students came forward, they didn't fill up with water immediately. Instead, they were busy picking the more beautiful cups. On what did they spend all their time? On selecting the cups.

Likewise, clothes are intended to provide warmth and cover the body. However, when buying clothes, we forget their original purpose and we are infected with a sense of vanity. I once heard of a group of very wealthy women who were watching a Paris fashion show on TV together. After watching, they wanted the models' clothes and flew over to buy them the next day. If people were to spend money lavishly like that, what would happen to their wealth? It would all be squandered away. Even if she has mountains of gold and silver, it would not be enough for her to spend. Because of her bad example, who would thoroughly emulate her? Her children. So, her wealth definitely won't last for how many generations? You can now judge correctly, her wealth won't last one generation. So, we must buy clothes

according to our financial situation. Don't ever pretend to be rich when you're not. Moving on.

Illness Enters Through One's Mouth

"When it comes to eating and drinking, I will not be picky; I will only eat the right amount and will not overeat." We must pursue a balanced diet and never be picky about food. Of course, you have to eat moderately and not excessively, because that will hurt your stomach. We must have good control of our diet, ensuring that it's neither excessive nor inadequate.

As the saying goes, "Illness enters through the mouth." We must also be wise in judging the food that we consume so that we only take in nutrition and not toxins. Many people mislead their stomach as they're only concerned about feeling full. We may be unaware that many foods contain high amounts of toxins and carcinogens. We also often hear about "junk food." Have you been eating it? Now there are statistics identifying the top ten junk foods. What are they? Let's take a look! But you must all be prepared. After I've finished speaking, please don't tell me that you can't live anymore because those foods are your favorites.

The first type is fried food. Nowadays there is one kind of disease filling up all the hospital beds called cardiovascular disease. Overconsumption of fried foods can easily cause clogged blood vessels; stroke and arteriosclerosis are both related to this. So, try to cut down on fried foods. If you ask people to cut off completely, they would feel lots of pressure. The second type is pickled foods. If it's very salty, it may cause nasopharyngeal cancer or ulcers. So, such foods should be minimized too. Some of these pickled foods are more natural and are less detrimental to health. You must also understand their production process.

The third type is meat products. My friends, sitting out in the open air, how long does it take for a piece of fresh meat to stink? About three hours! But how long can these meat products last? Some can be kept for three to five years. What is the underlying cause? They have added a lot of preservatives. I heard that preservatives are no longer needed to make mummies now. Many people don't rot after they die due to long-term consumption of these preservatives.

These meat products also contain nitrite, which is one of the three major cancer-causing agents. We have also come to understand the rate of cancer now. How high is it? One in four! What's the latest figure? It's already close to one in three. Right! Does a person get cancer randomly? Yes or no? "How unlucky, I got cancer!"

There's always a cause behind a result.

When you're very careful with your diet, have a great mood, often recite *Dizigui*, and only look at your own shortcomings instead of others', then your mood won't be so bad. By recognizing your own faults, you'll strive hard to correct them. Then you will obtain the joy of progress and growth. Because other than diet, there's another more serious contributing factor to cancer: your emotions. So, we must guard our mind and emotions well. When you are constantly in a good mood and are heedful of your diet, I guarantee that you'll be

protected against cancer. So my friends, are you confident that you won't get cancer? Yes! Give yourselves a round of applause.

The fourth type is crackers. Because many crackers are now made to suit customers' tastes, a lot of pastry fillings are added to these crackers. Since they are high in artificial sweeteners and calories, these sugars will be converted to fat if you eat too much of them. So, people now are getting fatter and fatter. Where does the trend of eating sweet stuff come from? The Europeans and Americans are really keen on eating sweets. So, the number of fatties here cannot be compared with theirs. Sometimes they have to occupy a few seats on the plane, which is rather terrifying.

So, people really cannot indulge in desires. Otherwise, we are harming ourselves and may even harm our loved ones. If a middle-aged man dies of stroke, that is a misfortune for humanity. So today, it's very important that you persuade your husband to restrain his diet. Of course, you must be tactful when you exhort him; you must use the greatest ability of a woman, it is called "tenderness." You can say to him, "My dear! Your presence makes my life colorful; without you, my life would only be black and white. You see, our children are so lovely! So, your health is our family's happiness." Your husband will be very pleased when he hears this. Then, you can slowly persuade him to eliminate some unhealthy foods.

The fifth type is soft drinks. I have the deepest impression of this beverage because I'm a victim of it. Did you notice? A thin person surely has a poor stomach and spleen. So, when I attended my friends' and relatives' weddings in the past, I was already full before the dishes were served. Impressive, right? I could belch too. I didn't eat what should have been eaten, and drank a lot of unhealthy beverages. Since soft drinks are irritating and acidic in nature, they can weaken and tear the stomach wall. So, my stomach was inflamed when I was in junior high school. I can still vividly remember that my grandparents had to cook porridge for me to eat. You see, one person's bad health can really cause trouble for his family. I had such a painful lesson and hope our children will not repeat it again. You see, I still have not completely discharged the carbonated gas from my stomach. So, a parent's correct concept of diet is a child's lifetime of happiness.

The sixth category is instant noodles. Let me say a bit more about soft drinks. What are the orange and lemon soft drinks that you consume made of? They're produced from petroleum and definitely not from real apples or oranges. They are phenols extracted from petroleum and taste exactly the same as oranges and many other fruits. I used to buy these materials and make orange soda on the spot to show my students. They saw me taking bottles of chemicals to produce the delectable orange soft drinks. As the idiom goes, "Seeing is believing." Only by demonstrating to them will they raise vigilance.

The sixth category is instant noodles. They are very high in calories and contain lots of preservatives, so they are harmful to health.

The seventh group is canned food, which also contains many preservatives.

The eighth category is sweetmeat. There are also many reports saying that the places producing sweetmeats can be very dirty and messy. Watch out for cockroach legs! Even these insects don't eat the preserved plums; their judgement is better than human's. The insects might die after eating only one plum but you won't lose your life even after consuming a

hundred plums. Since these bugs can naturally sense that this food is high in toxins, they will not eat it.

The ninth category is frozen food. The human body is similar to a machine. As an analogy, if today you pour a basin of cold water on a running motor and when it heats up again, you pour another basin of cold water on it, how long can the engine last? It should be useable for ten years, but now its lifespan may be reduced to three years. The human body is also a machine, our body temperature is around 37 degrees. Every time you drink cold water, do you hear the hissing sound? Once the ice is eaten, it will consume substantial energy in your body. Consequently, your body constitution will decline bit by bit. This is like a nail in my heart, because my teachers didn't tell me this in school. I would have been a good student if teachers had taught me. So, I only started acquiring this knowledge in college and I've never consumed these foods since. This is called, "It's never too late to mend previous mistakes."

Women now have many gynecological diseases which are related to eating ice, especially during their menstruation. Those few days are also a detoxification period, because lots of toxins must be eliminated. If you still eat plenty of ice at this time, your uterus will contract and the toxins cannot be discharged. After your uterus has shut down, it will only resume its normal function 28 days later. So, how long will these undischarged toxins remain in your body? If everything goes smoothly, they will be expelled after 28 days. Since these toxins circulate in your body, many gynecological diseases come about as a result. My lady friends, don't look at me so seriously. You should make your life choices now.

The tenth category is barbecued food. A roasted chicken leg is equivalent to the poison of 60 cigarettes; this is all statistics. As it contains the top carcinogen of the three big carcinogens, it can really damage your body. We now realize that there are too many tasks in life which we need to accomplish. For us to live a worthy life, we must first build the foundation by having a healthy body. When you really cannot resist the temptation to eat these foods, you must remember one of Wen Tianxiang's famous quotes, "Since time began, to die who can decline? Through history books in glory, let our crimson hearts shine!" Knowing that there are still many things to be done, you would not let your body suffer any harm. Then, you may be able to resist such foods.

Stay away from Intoxication

"While still young, I won't drink alcohol. Being drunk is most ugly."

Alcohol is regarded as an intestine-penetrating poison. Children must never get into the habit of drinking from an early age. Moreover, drinking alcohol isn't only harmful to one's own health, it can also threaten others' life and property. Many traffic accidents are related to drinking alcohol. Excessive liquor consumption can lead to a loss of control, leading to irreversible consequences. So, alcohol should be avoided from a young age. However, when it's used occasionally as medicine, it's not a problem. In certain freezing cold places, people

drink a little liquor to help promote blood circulation. But this should not be required in Taiwan because the island has spring weather throughout the four seasons.

Other than abstaining from alcohol, we must also stay away from certain bad things. For example, we must not smoke cigarettes because not only is it detrimental to our health but also to others' well-being. Is it possible for a smoker to not get lung cancer but his wife and children get it? You bet! The smoker inhales and exhales the smoke, but his loved ones only breathe in. Indeed, humans live in groups, one person's behavior will definitely affect others. Do we want to give good or bad influence? Of course, people must aspire to make a positive impact on others.

Once, when I was traveling on the bus in Haikou, I saw a man smoking cigarettes. What should I do? "The rise and fall of a nation concerns everyone." Even though I was in a foreign land with no one to turn to, I must have a sense of righteousness too. So, I walked over and requested him to stop smoking. Actually, they haven't learned *Dizigui*, so they don't know that "Doing wrong intentionally is called committing an evil." The "No smoking" notice on the bus was obvious. But, had I walked over and asked him, "Sir, are you illiterate?" I might have been in danger. So, I walked over to him and said, "I am sorry sir, I have asthma. Could you please stop smoking?" This man might have never encountered anyone asking him not to smoke, so he didn't know how to respond to my request. Suddenly, he wanted to get angry at me but didn't know what to do, so he muttered instead. When I saw him getting a little angry, I still maintained my friendly demeanor, and slowly turned away from him.

But I believe that "Primordially, people have an inherent good nature." So, I started using my sincere heart to pray for him, hoping that his wholesome roots would surface and he would stop smoking. Awaken him so to speak. After a while, I realized that there was no more smell of cigarette smoke. When I snuck a peek at him, he had already stopped smoking. After I got off the bus, my two friends who were on the bus with me said, "The smoker glanced at you twice." He had secretly glanced at me. Since I remained calm and relaxed at that time, his shame was aroused. After looking at me the second time, he put out the cigarette. Indeed, the ethos of society depends on everyone's effort.

One of the teachers in our center, upon hearing my story, brought forth a sense of mission to persuade others not to smoke. One day, when he was riding a bus, he saw a man smoking. He immediately approached that man and said, "Sir, I have asthma." This is what we call a skillful and expedient way. He asked him not to smoke and the man immediately put out his cigarette. When he had just sat down, suddenly another man took out his cigarette. He went to persuade him not to smoke and that man did as he was told. Then, when he was about to sit down, a few men got on the bus. A third person also took out his cigarette. This teacher thought to himself, could the gods be testing my true determination? He went to ask that man not to smoke. When a fourth person took out his cigarette, the first smoker said, "Please don't smoke!" Only when our mind is firm can we awaken social morality. Don't underestimate your own strength.

The Demeanor of Walking, Standing, Sitting, and Reclining

Let's move on to the next verse:

"I will always walk with a composed bearing and stand with an upright stance; and I will always give a deep bow to show my reverent salute; do not sit with legs apart and do not rock legs while sitting down." This phrase mainly teaches us to stand and sit with proper posture. Our ancestors had a very good analogy which serves as a great reminder to us: "Stand like the pine trees, lie like a bow, walk like the wind, and sit like a clock." Actually, such habits are most in accordance with the law of nature and are the best for health. Because when we stand like the pine trees, our spine will be very straight and scoliosis can be prevented. Are there many people getting bone spurs now? Many! Why? When you have a chance, you can go to the bus station to take a look and you'll know the reason. While lining up to take a bus, how does everyone stand? They all have different postures but most of them bend to one side. So, we see many young people now appear to have softened bones because they tend to lean on everything they come across. As a result, their bones become twisted in the long run.

When our previous generation taught their children who stood improperly, they would give them a stern glare. When their children didn't hold the chopsticks correctly, they would hit their hands. If these habits are formed since childhood, they will become very natural when grown up. If they're not developed from an early age, it will be very painful to rectify the bad habits in adulthood. Can you tell that I'm suffering? That's because I didn't stand erect like the pine trees. So my friends, if you see me hunch in the future, please remind me to stand upright. Because only by taking good care of this body can we make our parents and loved ones rest assured.

So, we must stand upright like the pine trees. What's the standard posture for standing? I'll demonstrate it today and I hope you won't mind. For men, when you stand, your feet and shoulders must be of the same breadth. Then, protrude your chest. This imposing posture is called "standing erect and firm." If you negotiate business with others using this remarkable demeanor, they will regard you as a trustworthy person. If you bend your waist when engaging in a big business talk, the other party won't be interested in cooperating with you.

So, our dignified manner will also gain others' trust. Feet even with shoulders, and don't lift your head too much as it's not good for the blood vessels in the back; just look straight ahead. Before negotiating with others, you must stand properly by visualizing a vast ocean in front that your mind is consonant with it. This is how men should stand. How about the standing posture for ladies? They can stand with one leg in front and another leg behind like this. How should they place their hands? I look very approachable, don't I? You can just place them laterally like this. During beauty pageants, the contestants stand in a very stately posture; this is also very important. This is the posture for standing. "Straight like the pines."

"Lie like a bow." When lying down, we should recline on the right side. Because leaning on the left side would put pressure on the heart and stomach, which can cause discomfort. So we sleep on our right side. Actually, this sleeping posture is also the best for our health. "Lie down like a bow, and walk like the wind." "Wind" moves very fast but it

won't make a loud noise. So, we must always walk with light steps. We've often heard the loud footsteps of our neighbor climbing up the stairs when it was rather late. But we have to be considerate of him because he must have thought that life is short. We should introduce *Dizigui* to him; only then will he know that raising children is not that difficult. We should always be mindful of whether our every deed or action has caused burdens for others. This is "walking like the wind." When walking, men can walk along both sides of a line while ladies can walk on the line as this will look more elegant. When walking, men must not swing their shoulders as that would look displeasing to others.

Next is "sitting like a clock." Let's demonstrate how to sit. Let me first demonstrate how the ladies sit. When sitting, both of her legs should be closed together. Then, her right hand should be placed on top of her left hand. After that, she can gently put her hands on her left lap. Do you think I can be married off? There's a teacher who runs the zither school and he gives etiquette training to his staff. When he held conferences with parents, many of them came for the meeting and his entire row of teachers also sat like this. After the meeting, these parents came over and said, "Teacher Li, where did you find this staff? Why do they look so dignified?" In the beginning, many mothers sat casually in various postures. I won't demonstrate here. But when they saw all the teachers sitting so dignified these parents slowly stopped leaning on the back of their chairs, and sat forward.

Indeed, the environment has an imperceptible influence on people. When we sit with the right posture, your family ethos will follow suit. If the father raises his feet on the table while sitting, then his children might learn the bad habit. Then, the parents said to Teacher Li, "If I send my children to your school, I'll have peace of mind." You see, our speech and behavior, as well as our grooming, are already building up others' trust in us. Alright, we will demonstrate how men should sit tomorrow. Thank you everyone.