

Student's Name

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Course

Date

Character and Self-Respect

Character is a distinctive quality that defines an individual and is based on personality and human disposition. Different characters display certain behaviors in various contexts; therefore, one's character is based on their conduct in a particular situation. However, the concept of self-respect is vital in the distinction of a character. For instance, it determines who an individual is in different contexts. As a result, the environment affects how humans behave, as one might change their behaviors to please others. In such situations, people abuse their self-respect to fit in under various conditions. The people discussed in this essay struggle to appeal to the world but later realize that it does not care about them. Later, they determine who they are and begin to respect their real character, navigating through the challenges of life. When they acknowledge who they really are, they no longer feel the need to please others. Hence, self-respect distinguishes personalities, and humans can only succeed when they understand themselves and take responsibility for their actions.

Self-respect helps people succeed in society by navigating through different challenges. According to Joan Didion, it involves honesty, discipline, and integrity (para. 7). Self-respect does not mean being full of oneself; it is the freedom from depending on others' expectations. Didion underwent critical changes in her life. She began by serving the expectations of others, struggling to please those who could elect her to the Phi Beta Kappa Society. She later realized

that she had lost the opportunity because she had not qualified; thus, she confidently accepted her fate.

Similarly, the character of Red from *Shawshank Redemption* (played by Morgan Freeman) tries his hardest to be released from prison on parole. His hearings entail different approaches. In the first two hearings, he tries to please the officers by explaining why he deserves rehabilitation (“Morgan Freeman” 0:00-1:48). Red does his best to look good and composed in order to appeal to those on the panel. However, he fails on the first two occasions but succeeds in the third hearing because at that point, he develops self-respect. Furthermore, he no longer wants to please those on the panel, and he explains that the word “rehabilitation” no longer has any meaning to him (“Morgan Freeman” 2:20). It is evident from these two stories that having self-respect increases a person’s chances of success.

Furthermore, self-respect is vital in addressing frustration. When people don’t have it, they rely on others’ expectations, and when they cannot meet them, they become frustrated. Consequently, the expectation is a social contract that people make with those around them. In most cases, people create expectations when you fail to push back and oppose their ideas. However, a person with self-respect can resist expectations and avoid frustration.

In *Shawshank Redemption*, Red had attended the first two hearings with the expectation of winning the argument. He had engaged the officers and tried to please them so that he could be released. However, Red later realizes that serving others’ expectations might be difficult. Instead, he focuses on his personality and how he feels. He insists that the word “rehabilitation” has no meaning to him because he had faced the committee on two occasions but failed to be released. Self-respect is very powerful because it is free from expectations. In the real world,

everyone has them, but when one focuses on serving such expectations, they might fail and become frustrated. Therefore, there is no need to cater to what others anticipate; one must focus on self-respect.

Stress-related problems are common in society today, and self-respect can help us address them. Focusing on it might be necessary for dealing with such issues. Moreover, stopping is one of the strategies psychologists use to limit negative thoughts and make sure one embraces life's challenges, and it borrows heavily from self-respect. It requires individuals to suppress or eliminate negative thoughts that are causing them stress. One of the techniques of thought-stopping is creating a reminder for the individual; when they make a mistake, they see the reminder and remember not to commit it again. As a result, the person learns how to develop and sustain self-respect. The kind of self-respect exhibited by Red helps him leave the prison after many years of trials and makes him speak up over his problems without fear of the authorities. Thus, he learns to be real and face his challenges.

Unrealistic optimism has proven to be useless during the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, having self-respect is not the same as being overly optimistic; it is the ability to confront challenges without fear. Unrealistic optimism is being so positive that one forgets the possibility of negative outcomes. The COVID-19 pandemic has made people believe that death is inevitable, and that any family can be affected. Furthermore, people are aware of the negative factors surrounding them and confront such situations by preparing for them. Red succeeds because he avoids unrealistic optimism and approaches the panellists, knowing that they are hostile in most of their decisions. Therefore, he uses his strength to confront such hostilities.

Overall, self-respect is the most important life skill that humans need because it helps them overcome life's challenges and make progress in life. Unrealistic optimism often fails, but self-respect teaches one how to confront problems. And although the post-pandemic world is full of stress and expectations, we can manage them by practicing self-respect.

Works Cited

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