

THE PUT DOWN DIET

by Kim John Payne

PART ONE

Self Change and the Authentic Adult

If you were to ask a child or teen 'Where does bullying really begin?', many will say that it is verbal and body language put downs that go unchecked and are not corrected by other kids and parents. They will probably go on to say that the child doing the put downs, sees this as permission to keep going or to do worse things.

Interrupting anti-social language is the key to preventing an escalation into bullying. If we are to ask the children and teens around us to change their way of acting or speaking we must be willing to explore and shift our own social behavior. This is the path to becoming an 'authentic' adult. As Gandhi put it..

'We must become the change we want to see.'

This process has three steps. Each step involves aspects of the Eight Fold Path. These steps should be done over a consecutive three week period without a break. Perhaps the most important of the Paths in seeking to make change is Right Endeavor which asks us, in essence to 'do what is doable'. Changing the way we think, feel, and act is only achieved in small steps and the Put Down Diet is arranged to make this possible.

Right Endeavor

Do not attempt what is beyond your powers, but also omit nothing for which they seem adequate. Set before yourself ideals which coincide with the highest ideals of a human being; for example, the aim of practicing such exercises as these in order to be able better to help and advise one's fellow human beings, if not immediately, then later in life.

THE STEPS...

Week 1 For one week become very conscious of the put downs you use. This includes both verbal and non verbal/body language put downs.

Right Speaking

In speech with others, say only what has sense and meaning. Make your conversation thoughtful. Do not be afraid to be silent often. Try not to use too many or too few words. (Try to withhold words that may be hurtful and if they are spoken, don't be afraid to apologize and reframe your words to be more considerate.)

For the whole three weeks, each night reflect on your progress. Try to do this in a self forgiving way that explores what it was that was bothering you at the time and emphasizes how you might do it differently next time.

Right Remembrance

Reflect on your words and actions each night. When opportunity offers one should handle a situation more wisely than previously. Experience is a rich treasure, and one should consult it before doing anything. Watch the actions of others and compare them with the ideal – but lovingly, not critically. One can learn much from observing others, including children.

Week 2 For one week become very conscious of the put downs that form in your feelings and thinking. Of course, also stay conscious of the verbal and non verbal put downs. Continue to reflect each night.

Right Thinking

This involves being able to refrain from approving or disapproving judgment and from criticism. (In this way one arrives at the habit of forming opinions that humanize rather than dehumanize.)

Week 3 For one week become very conscious of the put downs you hear around you and try to intercede and shift the conversation. You may use any common sense strategy to attempt this but in particular you may wish to try the 'Three D' approach outlined below. Continue to reflect.

Disapprove

Express disapproval...
'It's not okay to do/say things like that in this family/school. It makes things worse when you do/say things like that.'

Discover

Asking in an age appropriate way...
'What's the problem?' or 'What's bothering you?'

Do-Over

Do-over/rephrase...
'Let's work out how to do/say that in a better way.'

Right Action

Make your actions as far as possible harmonious with your surroundings. Weigh all actions carefully so that the eternal may speak through them, so that they may be good for the whole and for the lasting welfare of others.

As one person who went on this *Put Down Diet* reflected... *'This is not a yo-yo diet, it really goes deep and if taken seriously makes real shifts in the way in which you interact.'*

Therefore, the final Path that helps us in this ideal involves steadfastness of intent to make non-violent and authentic communication a part of one's daily life. Only then are we able to become the change we seek.

Right Resolve

Cultivate steadfastness. Make resolutions only after full consideration of even the most insignificant points. Avoid thoughtless acts and meaningless ones. For every act have sufficient reasons. Do no needless thing. When convinced of the rightness of a resolve, abide by it unfalteringly.

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by Kim John Payne, M.Ed.