

VALUES

Questions:
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What might Jewish Wisdom teach us about SELF-REGULATION that might help us understand the reality TV show that is the Presidential Campaign?

BEN AZZAI would also say: Do not scorn any man, and do not discount anything. For there is no man who has not his hour, and no thing that has not its place.

Pirke Avot 4:2

GOD HAS TOLD YOU, person, what is good and what the Lord expects from you. But to perform justice, to love kindness, and walk modestly with your God.

Micah 6:8

Seven characteristics typify the clod and seven the wise person:

1. Wise people do not speak in the presence of those who are wiser than they are
2. They do not interrupt their friend's words
3. They do not reply in haste
4. They ask what is relevant, they answer to the point
5. They reply to questions in orderly sequence
6. Of what they have not heard, they say, "I have not heard."
7. They admit to the truth

The opposite of these typify the clod.

Pirke Avot 5:9

DISTANCE YOURSELF FROM all that is ugly and unseemly, from lust and from anything that will lead people to be suspicious of you, and you will find favor in the eyes of God and man.

ˆRABBI MENACHEM MENDEL LEFFIN (1749-1826)

Rabbi Avraham Yitzchok Kook (1865-1935), the first Ashkenazi chief rabbi of Israel, reflects on how a person on the spiritual path comes increasingly to see the importance of speech:

As the soul is elevated, we become acutely aware of the tremendous power that lies in our faculty of speech. We recognize clearly the tremendous significance of each utterance; the value of our prayers and blessings, the value of our Torah study and of all of our discourse. We learn to perceive the overall impact of speech. We sense the change and great stirring of the world that comes about through speech.'

With Heart in Mind, Alan Morinis. p. 29

A PERSON'S BEHAVIOR should be decent in private as well as in public.

Rabbi Abraham Twerski
(B. 1930)

Self-regulation refers to how a person exerts control over his or her own responses so as to pursue goals and live up to standards. These responses include thoughts, emotions, impulses, performances, and other behaviors. The standards include ideals, moral injunctions, norms, performance targets, and the expectations of other people. The term *self-control* is sometimes used as a synonym for self-regulation, but other writers use it more narrowly to refer specifically to controlling one's impulses so as to behave in a moral fashion. The term *self-discipline* is also related to self-regulation and usually is used in a somewhat narrower sense, such as to refer to making oneself do things that one does not want to do and resisting temptation.

Overriding or altering one's responses is especially important in self-regulation. Living organisms, especially complex ones such as human beings, are constantly responding to both internal and external stimuli, but to act on all these responses would not be optimal or adaptive. Hence, people often find it useful to override their initial responses. They may direct their thought processes in directions other than where their minds naturally wander, they may attempt to change their emotional responses away from how they initially feel, and they may restrain themselves from carrying out impulses and desires. They may try to perform better than they would normally do, such as by making themselves persist on a difficult task. Most acts of self-regulation involve stopping the self from having a response, such as when a dieter refrains from eating a tempting but fattening food. There are, however, some instances of self-regulation that entail initiating a response, such as when a sleepy man drags himself out of bed on a cold morning.

Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification,
Christopher Peterson and Martin E. P. Seligman. P. 500

The Chafetz Chaim takes the tribulations that follow from wrong speech to another level, however. He agrees that speaking is the essential and defining feature of the human soul, and so words uttered in harmful ways impair the soul in its essential quality. The impact is felt not just in life, however, but on the soul itself, and that impact will last for all eternity and is the source of the soul's ultimate tribulation.

Psalms 34:13 therefore declares, "Who is the person who desires life, who loves days of seeing good? Guard your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit." The impact of our speech is felt in our days in this world and in the days of all eternity.

With Heart in Mind, Alan Morinis. p. 30

EVERY HUMAN BEING is due honor and respect just by virtue of being human, which means embodying a divine soul, made in the image and likeness of God. Because we are only human, we are scarred and marred, but those are superficial blemishes. Look deeper, and you will perceive the glowing radiance of a holy soul. Develop eyes to see the soul, and bow down in honor.

So great is the honor of created beings that concern for honor overrides even a negative prohibition promulgated by the rabbis.

Talmud Berachot 19B