

Sensitivity toward Others  
by Tom Antioho, Principal  
Reed City High School

Tolerance is a societal issue, but each and every one of us plays a significant role in its existence. What does tolerance mean? According to Webster's Dictionary it is "[t]he disposition to be patient and fair toward those opinions and practices different from one's own."

With all of the imperfections that we as individuals have, who are we to judge others? Why can't we offer the same acceptance, compassion, kindness and tolerance we desire for ourselves? Can we stop expanding our egos by demeaning others? Tolerance of others is an issue, one which we must work on daily.

Focusing on petty differences and superficialities allows hatred and prejudices to grow and fester. Inhumanities begin in little ways with seemingly unimportant acts, and words and can escalate to the point that wars are fought. People are both persecuted and killed; the world is forever changed.

No, we are not all the same in intelligence, personalities, race, appearance, creed or financial and social circumstances. Each of us has at least one talent, gift or personal resource that overshadows other deficiencies and contributes to society, causing it to be unique, ever changing and productive.

Talents have very little to do with race, gender, sexual orientation or normality but transcends all of the trivial stereotypes. Virtues are not specific towards any particular race, religion, or sex but are sprinkled liberally among all of them. Tolerance of others demands that these concepts not be merely hollow words and actions.

Rejecting the good in others because of fear, insecurity, or false priorities and values is by far more dangerous than opening a window to the unknown.

The human spirit and the ego are very fragile and are molded to a lesser or greater degree by all of our experiences and interactions with society. How many hurts have each of us helped to create that ignited pain, misery, a negative attitude, or a violent reaction? How much pain has each of us felt that was hurled upon us by the prejudiced, insensitive, or the ignorant? Supposedly, we are the normal in the mainstream of society; just imagine how deep words and deeds of hatred would cut if we were on the outer fringe of society.

Some people appear to have more gifts, talents, or personal resources; however, this offers no excuse to be prejudiced, judgmental, insensitive, or vengeful. These advantages are not given to gain power, manipulate others, inflict pain but should serve

as a means to improve the quality of lives, set goals and standards, and generally benefit everyone. More is required of those who are blessed with more.

The road to tolerance of the weaknesses and differences of others must not be an option and does begin with each of us. Each time we, individually or in mass, refuse to judge, blame, insult, or inflict pain on those who are different, we become a majority of one. That which is right and good will ever be the majority.

Each time we offer compassion, appreciate something new or different, and embrace each person's unique qualities, ideas and experiences, we add to the quality for each one of us and to society at large.

Our world depends on us...you and me. Isn't it time that we create more understanding of others on a daily basis by accepting and acting upon this simple motto: "Different from" doesn't mean "inferior to."