

Motivation / Self-esteem

Summary:

1. we are all different
2. we are all of equal worth
3. we are all of infinite worth

There is probably no subject that is so difficult to understand as to human motivation. In other words, why do people behave the way they do? We cannot understand our own behavior so how can we understand others' behavior?

Just casually looking around will tell us that we are all different. Not only do we look different but we think differently and behave differently. We have different taste in food, clothing, and leisure activities. Some want to play football while others want to swim. Some want to eat chocolate ice cream while others want strawberry ice cream. Some like this kind of music while others like that kind. Obviously we are all different.

If we can understand that people are different, then we can better appreciate the differences. Having differences doesn't necessarily mean one is right and one is wrong. It just means we are different. Of course, some ideas and some behavior are wrong. As a society we generally don't condone violence and crime, to give an obvious example.

Let's look at some differences and see how you rate? Remember there is no right or wrong here, just differences. Each number has two choices. Which one is most like you? Which do you mostly prefer?

1	Communicating orally	Communicating in writing
2	Working with your hands	Working with your mind
3	Doing things the traditional way	Doing things a new way
4	Being alone	Being with others
5	Preferring to be active	Preferring to rest
6	Working with things	Working with ideas
7	Large groups	Small groups
8	Staying up late	Getting up early
9	Planning ahead	Letting things happen
10	Eating alone	Eating with others
11	Practicing	Performing
12	Quickly answering the telephone when it rings	Hoping someone else will answer the telephone
13	Working in a group	Working alone
14	Enjoying fantasy	Wanting only the facts
15	Loud music	Soft music
16	Fancy clothes	Comfortable clothes
17	Liberal politics	Conservative politics
18	Fast music	Slow music
19	Group sports	Individual sports
20	Rules and guidelines	Unstructured situations
21	Being early	Being late

As you can see, we are all different. As we are all different, we all have certain strengths and we all have certain weaknesses. It is important to be able to accept ourselves as we are. This does not mean we are satisfied with ourselves. It means we are aware of our innate strengths and our weaknesses and then accept them. Innate means those things we are born with. For example, some people are born with genetic material that will make them tall. Others are born with genetic material that will make them short. Generally we can do virtually nothing to change this. This is what we mean by accepting what we are.

While we cannot change our genetic material, we can change many things about ourselves. We can change our mindset or worldview. We can change our habits. We can change our behavior to be more disciplined.

South Africa has only been democratic since 1994. One of the underlying assumptions of democracy is that each person is of equal worth. In other words the president is worth no more nor no less than every other person in the country. That is why each person is entitled to vote and each vote counts the same. The president doesn't have his/her vote count more than anyone else's vote. All are equal.

One should not confuse equality with sameness. We are not the same but we are all equal. We are all worth the same amount. While the president may be more important to the country than others, (s)he is not worth more as a person.

The South African constitution recognizes the innate (inborn) worth of each person.

Activity:

Take a R10 note. Take another piece of plain white paper the same size. Ask the participants which paper they would prefer. (It is assumed that everyone would want the R10 note.) Now take the R10 note and wad it up. Throw it on the floor and stomp it. Pick it up all crumpled. Now ask which paper they want. (It is assumed everyone would still want the R10 note regardless of its condition.)

Moral of this demonstration: Each person is made in God's image. Just like the image that has been stamped on the paper that makes the R10 note, we have God's image stamped on us as human beings. While the R10 note is worth R10, we as humans are all of infinite worth because we are humans. Even if we make bad decisions or do bad things, we are still of infinite worth. Just like nothing can change the worth of a R10 note, nothing we have done can change our basic intrinsic worth.

So what

Do

We do

then

African Renaissance

(Most of this material is taken from Sizwe Mthembu, 2005)

Summary:

1. need for African renaissance
 - a. not due to skin colour
 - b. due to history, culture, and consciousness
 - c. involves values
 - d. lived out daily
 - e. some values died out
 - i. lack of pride
 - ii. xenophobia
 - iii. lack of respect for human rights
 - iv. lack of creativity
 - v. moral degeneration
 - vi. corruption mismanagement of resources
 - vii. lack of entrepreneurship
 - viii. illiteracy
 - ix. social injustice
 - x. individualism
 - xi. materialism
 - f. few Africans today
2. African values (*ubuntu*)
 - a. interdependency
 - b. generosity
 - c. community consciousness
 - d. hospitality
 - e. sharing
 - f. development
 - hindered by:
 - i. xenophobia
 - ii. greed
 - iii. individualism
 - iv. self-hatred
 - v. victim mentality
 - vi. economic disparity
3. pursuit of wisdom
4. work ethic
5. pride
6. resilience

The word “renaissance” means rebirth or renewal. President Thabo Mbeki has talked much about this, as has the African Union.

First we need to describe exactly why there is a need for an African renaissance:

1. Being an African is not defined by a person's skin color or the amount of melanin one possesses. For example, the people in Northern Africa, such as Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Libya, and Egypt, are not dark skinned yet they are Africans.
2. A person is African due to his/her history, culture, and consciousness. In other words, people are African only if they see themselves as African.
3. Most of all, being an African involves values. An example of this is *ubuntu*.
4. Values are not merely spoken but lived out daily. Values are not merely external but internal or in the heart. In other words, values are not merely something that a person does some of the time, but values are what define who a person really is. A person's values are what (s)he believes deep within the heart.
5. Some African values have been lost, died out, or have pushed to the background. These include:
 - a. Lack of pride and sense of belonging to Africa
 - b. Xenophobia (fear of foreigners)
 - c. Lack of respect for human rights
 - d. Lack of creativity, for example Africa is the only continent that has not manufactured its own car.
 - e. Moral degeneration
 - f. Corruption, lack of integrity
 - g. Mismanagement of resources
 - h. Lack of entrepreneurship
 - i. Illiteracy
 - j. Increasing gap between the rich and the poor
 - k. Individualism
 - l. Obsession with materialism
6. Therefore, according to our definition, there are few Africans today.
7. Since there are few true Africans, there is a strong need for an African renaissance.

African Values

There are several characteristics of what *ubuntu* means that need to be examined.

1. interdependency – I am a human because of others. No one is an island. The emphasis is on relationships. Relationships are more important than possessions and wealth.
2. generosity – We can see this in the Bible. Abraham sought refuge in Africa due to a drought (Genesis 12:11). When he left, he was a person of considerable wealth (Genesis 13:1-2). Jesus, during his early childhood, accompanied his parents as they sought refuge in Africa to escape political violence (Matthew 2:13-15).
3. community consciousness – Community elders have practiced *ukusisela*. This helped close the gap between the rich and the poor.
4. hospitality – Joseph was born and reared outside of Africa. Yet, when he came and lived in Africa he rose to the high political office of governor or prime minister (Genesis 41:37-41). Jacob, Joseph's father, was a refugee in Africa, yet was given the best land (Genesis 47:5). Moses grew up in the king's home (Exodus 2:10) and received a good education there (Hebrews 11:24-26). In more modern times, one can see this practiced when people bring goods and food to funerals.
5. sharing – There is a saying "umuntu umuntu ngabantu." This emphasizes a sense of interdependence that rules out selfish ambition and individuality. This is epitomized

when relatives help raise other family member's children. This practice reinforces the saying that it takes a village to raise a child.

6. development – Sadly, development is today hindered by such things as:

- xenophobia
- greed
- individualism
- self-hatred
- victim mentality
- economic disparity

There is a West African saying that says “if you want to go faster go alone; if you want to go further go as a team.”

Pursuit of wisdom

One of the first forms of writing – hieroglyphics – was developed in Africa. The world's oldest university, the University of Al-Azhar, was founded in 970. Therefore, it is over 1,000 years old. About 2,500 to 2,100 years ago during the “golden age” of ancient Greece, many of the scientists and philosophers there were heavily influenced by Africans. About 1,200 to 800 years ago, Africans helped Europeans in the areas of mathematics, astronomy, medicine, architecture, and philosophy. Africans helped Europeans pull themselves out of the so-called “dark ages.”

Probably no other factor influenced this period of great learning more than the idea of “life-long learning.”

An example of the pursuit of wisdom is found in the Bible. The Queen of Sheba heard about King Solomon's wisdom and wealth. Not content to merely hear about King Solomon she went to see for herself (I Kings 10:1-13, 2 Chronicles 9:1-12).

Another example is the pyramids of Egypt. These are considered engineering marvels and are still standing after thousands of years.

Sadly today many people do not read as much as they could. There is the crude saying “if you want to hide something from a black person, put it in a book.” Some might say that reading is secondary because Africa is an oral culture as evidenced by the traditional role of story telling. While this may be true, it does not negate the importance of literacy in today's society.

Africa has enormous natural resources such as minerals, diamonds, oil, and timber, just to name a few. To exploit these resources in a sustainable equitable way that will empower all citizens will take wisdom.

Work ethic

Years ago farming was the backbone of the economy. This required both smart and hard work. The work ethic displayed enabled Africans to shelter foreigners who sought refuge here. The Jews spent 400 years in Africa as refugees. Because of the wealth generated and stored throughout the years, there was an abundance and this could be shared.

The results of a strong work ethic enabled your men to pay lobola based on what they had inherited. It also enabled a community to weather the years of floods or drought when production was weak. They could then depend on the abundance of former years.

Sadly, some of the strong work ethic has been eroded. The mindset of “umsebenzi womlungu” (white man’s job) has the effect of people losing ownership over their work. This has fostered a hand-out mentality and lack of initiative. Moreover, it has led to blaming others for our misfortune, looking for scapegoats, and creating a victim mentality. There is a Zulu saying that says “imbla yaswela umsila ngokulayezela.”

Lastly a strong work ethic will shift people from being mere consumers to being producers. Merely blaming the past or blaming others will not help anyone. Nothing of any significance was ever accomplished without a strong work ethic.

Pride

In this context, pride means a sense of allegiance and belonging or a sense of loyalty to Africa. It also means having a hope of achieving the dream of African renaissance.

By having pride Africa can stand equally with the rest of the world. By having pride we can fully define our identity. By having pride we can lead the world rather than merely follow. Lacking pride will cause us to throw away our Africaness.

By having pride we will cherish our historical achievements. We will take care of our natural environment and resources. We will see our people as our greatest resource and will seek to empower all our citizens. We will see our future not with apprehension but with hopeful optimism. We will believe in ourselves and in our uniqueness. We will understand why so many in the world want to come and visit us. We will understand what others see in our uniqueness that we often fail to see ourselves.

Nelson Mandela said that our greatest fear is not that we are inadequate but that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light and not our darkness that frightens us.

Resilience

The greatest glory in living lies not in ever failing but rising up every time you fall.

Africa has experienced much in the last few hundred years. From slavery to colonialism, from colonialism to apartheid, from apartheid to the freedom of democracy, Africa has come far.

As someone one said, “a problem is just an opportunity for you to do your best.”

Sadly some still have an attitude of hopelessness and defeat. But one African value that still can be called upon is resilience. With resilience, there is no challenge that cannot be overcome. It was the same in years past and it still the same today.

With resilience the problems of today will be overcome. That is for sure.