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The Two Principles Underlying

From a Chan practitioner's perspective, the two principles underlying a happy family and successful career are "wholehearted devotion in caring for family" and "full commitment to career."

Rich or poor, if we can devote ourselves to caring for each and every family member, we can make our whole family healthy and happy. Whatever our job status, we can help ourselves and other people be successful through full commitment to our career.

An abundance of material wealth may not result in a happy family, and a painted glamorous facade cannot be equated to career success. A family will be happy only if every family member feels respected and cared for; excellence in one's trade, whatever it is, can only be attained by full commitment, body and mind, to one's work.

Mutual Respect and Support among Family Members

An over-emphasis on individualism in modern society has resulted in generation gaps, the breakdown of relationships between husband and wife, and estrangement between siblings. Although living together, each family member looks out for themselves, expecting others to conform to their will, and even fighting for power and money. In the end, the parents do not understand their children, and children do not appreciate their parents' painstaking devotion. Husband and wife neither trust in nor compromise with each other. Ultimately, everyone in the family loses a sense of trust and security.

As a result, elderly parents are sent to nursing homes, teenage children become rebellious, young adults flee from home to seek independence, and marriages become fragile. The "happy family" that everyone longs for becomes no more than a dream and empty words. However, if a husband and wife have mutual respect, understanding and fidelity, as well as care and love, and can learn from each other, it's not really hard to have a successful marriage and build a happy family.

Diligent and Steady Career Management

The values of society are inverted and confused. Most people use wealth, fame, power and social status to measure career success. They don't know that a successful career depends on both merit accumulated from previous lives and efforts made in the present life. Depending solely on the efforts of this life, without the karmic rewards resulting from past lives, one cannot necessarily achieve satisfaction in the pursuit of fame, fortune, status, and power.

Many people do not understand this underlying principle. So they disregard public welfare and others' personal interests in the pursuit of selfish gains. They try to slip through the cracks and take advantage of loopholes in the law, and resort to force or trickery, official corruption, and fraud, causing harm to many innocent sentient beings and damaging social morality. For the moment they may seem to be riding high. But eventually, they will be brought to justice and condemned by society. Even if they do escape temporarily, they cannot escape karmic retribution in the future.

Of course, there's nothing wrong with pursuing the ideal of career success. But doing so blindly or

recklessly, without heeding the karmic law at all, one becomes a scourge of society, harming oneself and others.

As most people in the modern world crave short-term gain, whenever they feel constrained, the first thing that comes to mind is making a change. So the turnover rate in all professions is becoming increasingly high, with many people repeatedly changing professions and fleeing poorer work conditions. With such an unstable work situation, one's body and mind will be restless, creating family misfortune.

Of course, if job changes accompany a transition to a new phase of one's life, or are an adjustment resulting from a transfer or promotion, or if changing profession is a strategic move, these are all necessary developmental steps on the road to success. However, if one is perpetually dissatisfied with one's current work environment, and unwilling to fully commit oneself to the job at hand, success in any profession or any job is simply impossible.

The Busy Make the Most of Time

In today's world, everyone is busy. To earn a living, people often hold more than one job or several part-time jobs. Already exhausted by their day jobs, they may still be obligated to attend social activities in the evenings. Busy with their careers, some people neglect caring for their families. They may only see their children once or twice a week, and even the husband and wife have insufficient time to communicate because they leave early for work and come home late. With such a hectic lifestyle, taking proper care of the family and children is a big problem.

However, from my personal experience and what I have learned, I can say that "the busy make the most of time," because with determination, busy people can fully utilize and manage their time so that both work and family are well taken care of.

Although I am not encumbered with a wife and children, I do have a large monastic family with monastic disciples to provide for, take care of, and educate, taking on the triple responsibilities of father, mother and teacher. I must wholeheartedly devote my energies to running the monastery and caring for my followers. Even with an extremely busy schedule

spreading the Dharma, I never forget to take care of and show concern for every disciple, sometimes by discussing with and guiding them at group meetings, and at other times teaching and encouraging them through individual conversations. As the Chinese proverb goes, "No one knows a child better than his father." As their Master, I think that they must have found in me a bosom friend who understands them well, or they would not be so happy to be my disciples. Similarly, if parents do not know their children's aspirations, personality, interests, aptitudes, and potential, they will not be able to guide them and assist them in choosing their future. If parents can't grow and learn with their children and become their understanding and intimate friends, they won't be able to gain their children's trust or make them feel secure.

Devotion to Both Family and Career

As long as we devote ourselves wholeheartedly to both our family and career, we can certainly succeed in both realms.

When guiding people in Chan practice I often remind everyone to "Live in the present. The Buddha is in the present." That means that we should work hard and be at peace, right here and now. Knowing that taking one firm step at a time, rather than taking hasty, shaky steps, is the wise thing to do, we remind ourselves that the present life is transient, and we must proceed by steady steps so as not to live in vain.

While dealing with the practicalities of everyday life, if we are fully devoted to experiencing and adapting to everything we encounter, unconcerned with success or failure, then we are truly practicing the DDM teaching: "face it, accept it, deal with it, and let it go."

In conclusion, as long as each family member shows sincere caring and mutual empathy, it won't take long to create a happy, successful family. Moreover, we will be able to achieve outstanding results only if we devote our full energies to the job while working, focus and think deeply while thinking, and put our whole heart

into problems while dealing with them.

Even if we don't gain anything in a material sense, the resulting physical and mental stability, broader experiences, and contributions to society will all be worthy achievements.

This article is based on a speech delivered by Venerable Master Sheng Yen on August 12, 1995 at a seminar entitled "Pursuit of a Happy and Successful Life" at Dharma Drum Mountain's Anhe Branch Monastery in Taipei. The article also appears in the book *A Peaceful World*.