

Interview with Swami Tejomayananda

Compiled by the editors of "Youth: Keeping the Balance"

Q: How can one cultivate focus at work without getting distracted by surrounding events?

A: If you are truly inspired by your work or job, then you will be totally absorbed in it, and things or events around you will not distract you. So, most importantly, you have to find that work or job which truly inspires you. Also realize that someone else cannot live your life and you cannot live someone else's life. You must remind yourself of this and therefore commit yourself to taking charge of your life. This way you will remain focused.

Q. But sometimes people find something inspiring – something that they would love to do, but they don't get an opportunity to do it because they do not get that job, they do not get an opportunity to do it. What should a person in that situation do?

A. One can either be a master of circumstances or a victim of them. If one says that he has the inspiration but has no opportunities, then that person is not sufficiently inspired. A truly inspired person will create the opportunities and charge ahead. I heard a joke recently that illustrates what I am saying. It is said that one must learn from Noah. He floated his company when the world was in liquidation!

Q. We do not know what exactly to do in life; everyone seems to be following a trend. Everybody wants to do an MBA but nobody knows why they want to do it!

A. The problem of "what to do" is not a new one. It has always been there in all ages. In our lives we notice that we have different interests at different stages. As a child we may have been interested in one particular thing while we may get interested in something else when we enter college. For example, Swami Vivekananda as a boy was very interested in becoming a *Tangewala* (carriage driver). However, his interests changed when he grew up. Similarly, we may at times feel like becoming a music director, and at other times becoming a professor and so on. This is nothing new.

Q. In our life we have so many choices. How do we make the right choice?

A. You will notice that among all your interests, the subject in which you have an aptitude will fascinate you. You will find that interest in this subject overshadows all other interests and you are easily able to sacrifice other interests in its favor. The question of what to do will not bother you. Consistency and determination will automatically come. You will have to discover this for yourself.

Now suppose you are not able to find out what your real interests are, then what to do? Follow this simple technique: note down all your interests and just choose anyone of them. Once you have chosen a field, make it a point to develop interest and grow in it. In fact, you will find every subject interesting if you take interest in it!

Q. Parents just do not understand us; there is a big generation gap. They think we are not ambitious and too fun loving. They think we are not serious about anything and do not work hard enough.

A. Stop blaming your parents! When you were a child you can say that your parents were responsible for everything you do. It is they who decide which school you go to and so on. But once you mature and go to college and university you can no longer say that your parents are responsible for everything. It is not that your parents do not understand you. They will understand and support you provided you show consistency and results in whatever you do. Simply being adamant without any consistency, and changing your interest every now and then will not serve any purpose.

Enough of putting the blame on someone else! Take responsibility for your life and put it in your hands. Start from wherever you are and show the results. Have faith in your self. There is no need

to have low self-esteem. If you are determined enough, you will find that all support and guidance will automatically come to you.

In all stages of life, everyone will face some obstacle or the other. There may be many who may criticize and discourage you. But hold on to your faith. If a task is worthy of doing then do it. Do not get angry when a person criticizes you. If support does not come from one source, then it will come from another. Learn to enjoy your work and make the most of it. Do not let the fear of failure hold you back. Now stop looking for excuses and sympathy. TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR LIFE. You have to lift yourself up; do not depend on others to pull you up. Take charge and you will become successful.

Q. Who is a karma yogi?

A. A karma yogi is a selfless worker who follows the path of action. He or she performs selfless activity, dedicating all his or her actions to a higher ideal and gives up all sense of doer-ship.

Swami Chinmayananda