

## Develop Understanding

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Note: As I always maintain, everything I say below is only my opinion, which is based on my own experiences and observations, and it is subject to change any time! – Swami Devanand

People often ask: what is the most fundamental rule or principle or guideline that one should live by? This is a tough question, but here is my take on it.

I think the most basic thing for us to do is to try to develop an understanding of the nature of everything. We are all born with some innate understanding given to us by Nature upon which more understanding piles up as we grow up, which comes from various sources.

The most wonderful thing about us humans is the brain – the ability to think. As soon as we become aware of this unique gift, we must put it to good use. We must use our brain – when we are not unduly disturbed by negative emotions – to contemplate about ourselves, about the people and the world around us, about the phenomena of life and Nature. We must apply our capacity to observe (using all the sensory inputs, not just the eyes) to supply rich input to the thinking process. We must also consider knowledge and insights offered freely by others – Nature itself, people, books, etc. – to save precious time in reinventing the wheel, as long as we let our brain accept or reject ideas based on what it thinks is right or what "feels right" to it.

The Dalai Lama recommends "analytical meditation" as a useful technique to look at a topic of interest from all sides, for as long as it takes to develop understanding. This is exactly what we must do all the time for everything in life.

First of all, this type of thinking will help you develop self-awareness: understanding of yourself, which is most critical to survive and enjoy life. This type of understanding will help you create your own unique rules, ideas, and strategies for living a rich and stress-free life in this world. For instance, when you understand how your body works, you will be able to develop a proper food/exercise/sleep/cleanliness/care regimen. When you understand how your car works, you will be able to use/drive it better. When you understand how people are driven by their emotions, you will stop expecting purely logical responses. And so on.

How does one prioritize this learning? One suggestion is to listen to your heart to decide which topics are of utmost interest. Also, once you develop a reasonably satisfactory understanding about some topic, don't "stir the pot" unless there is compelling evidence to do so!

To summarize: make your own brain your Guru!

*Last updated: 10 July 2019*