

## **TOLERANCE**

*Question before the story:* When someone does something that annoys you, do you ever shout at him or say unfriendly words?

### **THE HUNTER AND THE QUAILS**

There was once an old quail, a beautiful elderly bird with long striped tail feathers and a plump chest. He lived with his huge family and a lot of friends, and in total they were a flock of about 1,000 quails. In the same area lived a quail hunter. He could make a quail call, which is a sound like a quail in distress. When he made that sound, all the quails in the area would rush over to him thinking that a quail nearby needed their help, but he would throw a big net over them to capture them and sell them for people to eat.

The old quail had the responsibility to keep his flock safe, and he knew about the hunter, and the way he planned to destroy his family with a net. The old quail thought to himself, "I must make a plan to save my flock."

So he called his family and friends and had a meeting. He said, "You need to know that there is a great danger. There is a hunter who wants to trap us in a net, kill us and sell us as quail meat for people to eat." All the quails were shocked and upset, and murmured among themselves. But the old quail continued, "I have a plan that can save us. When the hunter covers us with a net, we must each raise our neck at the same time. Then we must all fly away and drop the net on a thorn bush, so we can all escape." The old quail's family and friends all enthusiastically agreed.

The next day, the hunter went out with his net, and made the sound of a quail in distress. The flock immediately flew over toward the hunter, because they naturally want to help their friends in distress. The hunter threw the net, which landed on top of many of the quails. But they remembered the old quail's plan, and they immediately stretched their necks up toward the sky, which lifted up the net a little, freeing their wings to fly. Then they suddenly flew up with the net over them, and all at once they turned, dropping the net onto a thorn bush. Their plan worked! They escaped the hunter and flew far away.

The hunter shook his head in disbelief and went home. And when he got home, his wife, seeing him arrive empty-handed, was upset. She said, "What are you doing? How can you come home with no birds? Get back out there and get those birds!" When the hunter tried to tell her what happened, she did not believe him, and she accused him of lying and being lazy. The hunter said, "Please be patient. The birds all worked together this time. But I know how family members are, they always have disagreements, bickering and arguing. So, while they are bickering, I will trap them and bring them home. We have to be patient."

Over the next several days, the hunter went out and made the quail's distress call, and they loyally flew over toward the hunter, who threw the net on them. But each time, they raised up their heads and flew up with the net, dropping it on a thorn bush.

The hunter was patient, and every day he tried again. And then one day, when the quails were eating, one quail stepped on another quail's head by accident. The quail who felt a sharp claw on his head made a loud squawking noise, scolding the other quail loudly. The other quail quickly removed his foot and pleaded, "Oh, I am sorry. Please don't be angry at me. It was an accident." The quail was in an irritated mood, and he felt very annoyed that someone would step on his head. He squawked louder, "You are always so clumsy! You don't look where you are going." The other quail tried to calm him, but he wouldn't listen. He continued scolding, "I still have a bruise where you bumped me yesterday. You don't care about anyone else. You are just trying to get all the food. Go away! You are so obnoxious. You need to learn to be more considerate!"

The old quail heard all the noise. He thought, "This fighting is no good. It will lead to danger. If the quails are having disagreements, they won't cooperate to raise up the net to escape." Just then he saw the hunter coming, and called out to his flock, "Everyone fly away! Escape!" The hunter made the quail distress call. Many of the quails flew away when they heard the old quail's command. But the quail who stepped on the other's head and the quail who was scolding him were confused, and started making noise and upsetting the other quails around them. The hunter threw the net and trapped them. One of the quails angrily said, "I am not going to hold up the net for you!" Another quail shouted, "Why should I help any of you?" Then the hunter quickly grabbed the net with the quails in it, took them home and, slaughtered them, and he and his wife cooked a big meal of quail meat.

*Questions:*

1. What did the quails do to escape the hunter?
2. How did one quail react when another quail stepped on his head?
3. Why didn't he just calm down?
4. What happened after the quail scolded the other quail?
5. Why didn't they use the old quail's plan to escape?
- 6.

*What the Buddha said:*

"Let a person guard himself against irritability in speech; let him be controlled in speech. Giving up misconduct in speech, let him practice good conduct in speech. . . . The wise are controlled in bodily action, controlled in speech and controlled in thought."

*Discussion about tolerance:*

Even though the quails had the wise advice of the old quail about how to escape the hunter, several quails got caught. Why did that happen? Because the quails were not calm and cooperative. One quail wanted to complain and scold another, and this upset the birds around them so none of them could think clearly and so they did not want to help each other. The quail who was scolding and squawking was irritable and cared only about his own pain. He kept scolding, accusing the other quail of being clumsy, uncaring, obnoxious, and trying to get all the food. Even though he was being inconsiderate by scolding and complaining, he accused the other quail of not being considerate. He should have been more tolerant. He was being *intolerant*, which means not tolerant.

Can you think of a time when you had to be very tolerant? Or a time when you were not very tolerant? What does “tolerance” mean in your own words? It means that when you don’t like something, when something is unpleasant, you remain calm, speak politely, and don’t criticize, scold, accuse, shout, or complain.

What are some other examples of an intolerant way of speaking? Saying unkind or hurtful words when someone says or does something you don’t like. Sometimes it is not the words you say, but the way you say it, that shows that you are irritable and intolerant. Raising your voice, a bossy or arrogant tone of voice, or whining, or an angry expression on your face, signal to others that you are not tolerant.

There are some times when we should *not* be tolerant of misbehavior. We can politely tell someone to stop doing something wrong. We can advise someone not to do something that is upsetting others. We can let someone know that he is annoying us. We can politely advise someone to be more considerate. We can use a firm tone of voice if needed. But we should not shout and upset others, like the quail upset the other quails and caused them to get caught by the hunter. However, if someone is about to do something *very* wrong, where someone might really get hurt, we may have to shout to protect him or her. That is not an angry or irritable shout, but a protective shout.

There are many times when we *should* be tolerant, but we are not. We scold, complain, insult others, or say something unkind when we are annoyed. Can you think of some things that make you more irritable and likely to be intolerant? A bad mood? Feeling tired? Being hungry? Having a bad day at school? Losing something that is important to you? A friend disappointing you? Do these make you impatient and intolerant? When we are irritable, we only think of pleasing ourselves, making ourselves comfortable. We might shout at someone to be quiet when we are sleepy. Is that a good excuse to shout at someone? We might make an angry face at someone who is in our way when we are walking. What if that person had only good feelings toward you until you made an ugly face at him – does he deserve that? When we are feeling irritable and someone disagrees with us, we might insult him or say something hurtful. We may

be more impatient and angry toward our brothers and sisters, cousins, and some of our friends -- the people who are closest to us -- than we are toward other people.

Another way we might be intolerant is when we force our ideas on others, and make them agree with us, and we don't listen to different ideas. Can you remember a time when you thought your idea was much better someone else's, and you wouldn't listen to his or her idea? Why not listen to different ideas? We very often learn from other people's ideas, and we should at least listen to them, and we might find that their idea is better after all. The world is interesting *because* people have so many different ideas. We would not want to live in a world where everyone is just like us, agreeing with everything we think, say and do. Tolerance makes us able to enjoy and learn from the many different people in the world.

When we are feeling irritable, we think that if we make others around us do exactly what we want, then we will be happy. Yes, we might feel satisfied when we get our way, when others do what we want. And, we see our parents "forcing" us to do what they want us to do, so we might think that we can do the same to others. But our parents, with all their knowledge and experience, are trying to do what is best for us, teaching and guiding us. We, on the other hand, are young and inexperienced and have no right to force our will on others. There are many people who have a bad habit of forcing their will on others – they are pushy, critical and self-centered -- and they are often called "control freaks" or bullies. They do not grow up to be peaceful and happy – people get annoyed by them, so they end up being rejected and lonely.

We all feel irritable sometimes. It takes self-control to be tolerant: you have to hold back your anger and your desire to make things go your way. There are times when we get more easily annoyed than usual, and we don't have as much self control. But we should *notice* when we are annoyed and *remember* to try to be more tolerant. The more we *notice* when we are annoyed, the more we can remember to be tolerant. And the more we *remember* to be tolerant, the more likely we are to *be* tolerant. And the more often we are tolerant, the more we learn to remain peaceful and tolerant in many situations. What will people think of you when you are peaceful and tolerant? Will they appreciate your attitude? Or would others rather hear you complain and criticize? There are some people who do like to get together and complain and criticize others. But, good people prefer the company of others who are peaceful, kind and tolerant.

#### *Group Activity:*

Form groups of three students. Each group demonstrates to the others an irritable response and a tolerant, polite response. The first person in the group describes something a person says or does which could make him or her feel annoyed. The second student gives an irritable response. The third student gives a tolerant response. Some examples of situations which could be annoying are:

- (1) A classmate takes your book by mistake.
- (2) A classmate is making too much noise when you are trying to concentrate.
- (3) Someone accidentally splashes you with mud.
- (4) Your brother or sister eats all the cookies and you didn't get any.
- (5) Another student carelessly messes up a picture you drew.
- (6) Your cousin asks you too many questions.

The second student should show by her words, facial expression, and/or tone of voice a typical way in which she would respond if she was feeling very irritable. The third student should demonstrate a gentle or appropriately firm tone of voice and polite words that he would realistically say in that situation. Then each person in the group changes roles, so that each person in the group has a chance to describe an annoying situation, show an irritable response, and show a tolerant response.

*Individual Activity:*

Make a list of situations that sometimes happen to you in which another person makes you feel annoyed. Then write an appropriate polite and tolerant response that you realistically would say in that situation.