
Notes From Melba

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How Good Do We Have to Be?

I'd like to share some thoughts from a book I have read and re-read many times, **How Good Do We Have to Be?**, by Harold S. Kushner. May they mean as much to you at this time as they have to me.

Kushner's book deals with the level of perfection so many of us expect from ourselves and from each other, which may result from:

1. Parents who wanted the best for their children, but in the process corrected every little mistake, tried to live out their lives through their children, had unrealistic expectations of their children (particularly first-born children), or didn't know how to love their children.
2. Expectations in school from teachers who were impatient when anyone got something wrong.
3. Ways we have come to be ashamed of our imperfections and differences.

People who expect perfection from themselves often pretend to be someone they are not, and attempt to come across as flawless and perfect.

When we make a mistake or hear criticism of something we have done, we tend to question our worth as a person.

If we allow ourselves to be defined by our worst moments instead of our best ones, we begin thinking of ourselves as people who never get things right, instead of capable people who sometimes make thoroughly human mistakes.

When we begin to see our mistakes as experiences we learn from, we will be willing to try something new without being afraid of doing it wrong.

Although being human will never mean being perfect, we should not let failures be a reason for giving up the struggle to be as good as we can.

Since our only alternative is living and working with imperfect people,

happiness comes from giving people the right to be human, weak, forgetful, etc., at times.

Can you imagine the differences we could experience in teams and organizations if we would realize that all of us struggle with imperfections and be able to forgive each other for our human weaknesses?

Kushner concludes the book with a comparison of life to a baseball season. Even the best team loses about one-third of its games. Even the worst team sometimes plays brilliantly.

Our goal as people is not to go all year without losing a game, but to win more games than we lose.

*“Out of timber
as crooked as that
which man is made of,
nothing perfectly straight
can be carved.”*

— Immanuel Kant

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