



Instilling Discipline and Responsibility in our Lives, by Angeles Arrien

Responsibility is not only the ability to respond to what comes towards us, it is also the capacity to stand behind our actions and to be responsible for all that we do, or do not do. This means that we do not allow ourselves to be in denial, or to be self-indulgent. Our ability to respond impeccably to the circumstances at hand, and with integrity to the events we create brings us into the arena of effective leadership.

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This aspect of responsibility is discipline. Discipline is the process of facing life directly and acting without haste. The word discipline actually means “being a disciple unto oneself.” When we are disciples unto ourselves, we honor our own rhythm, ask for help that is needed, and consistently attend to the actions needed, in a step-by-step way. We are most likely to be thrown off course when we have too much to do, or too little to do. These times should act as reminders to engage discipline, to move not rashly, but step-by-step.Â

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Discipline and responsibility are the leadership tools for honoring structure and function. Land-based peoples know that too much structure or form leads to rigidity and calcification, and too much function or random creativity leads to chaos. Thomas Cleary’s Zen Lessons: the Art of Leadership reminds us that if we do not adhere to the “three don’ts of leadership” we will not only be irresponsible, but we will dishonor the processes of discipline found in all structures and functions:Â

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“In leadership, there are three don’ts:

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Â Â Â When there is much to do, don’t be afraid;Â

Â Â Â When there is nothing to do, don’t be hasty; and

Â Â Â Don’t talk about opinions of right or wrong whenÂ

Â Â Â action can be taken.

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A leader who succeeds in these things won’t be confused or deluded

by external objects and circumstances.”

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When we apply the guidelines of the “three don’ts” in our lives,

we honor the inherent aspects of structure and function by instilling discipline and responsibility into all that we do or steward in our lives.

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--Angeles Arrien, from her August 2008 Newsletter

