

The Complete Education Portal

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views

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## Learning from Society: An Integral Life Experience



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The recent COVID-19 highlighted the importance of service, support for and by the society, and investments in basic and translational research. More importantly from education point of view, it emphasized the importance of classroom education, which suffered during the pandemic. In addition to medical issues, COVID-19 has exposed the problems of mental health in adults as well as children due to societal isolation. All these necessitate the importance of support network from family and community. The ongoing pandemic highlights that medical advances alone are not enough to serve as a panacea for finding

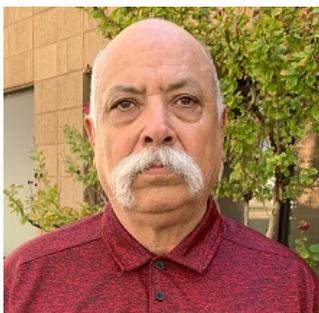
remedy for public health issues. Social and professional skills like calmness in stormy situations, firm decision making, art of negotiating, effective communication and diplomacy are deemed necessary in this century. These skills cannot be learned only from prescribed curriculum. Good engagement and outreach with the society, observing others, participating in social and professional activities of interests are some ways that can be easily considered for upgrading skills.

### **Everyday Learning: A Beautiful Experience**

a little good today,” is the tag phrase that beams on the package of Tom’s toothpaste. le this is a great marketing aspect, it does greater good. As children prefer this hpaste, the phrase serves mostly as a motivating factor for kids daily as they start the day brushing their teeth. How beautiful it is to encounter such a daily unassuming learning rity as we begin the day by experiences from our daily activities. One should admire how ness marketing experts intertwine marketing tricks with life lessons to boost market e. Such activities are welcoming one as they cultivate confidence and positive acteristics in people. There are so many examples like that of Tom’s!

### **Learning by Observing**

regularly encounter family members, teachers, friends who are our preceptors for daily lessons beyond our structured academic curriculum. It is our interest and efforts that can us learn from our colleagues whom we move around about 8-hours in a weekday. It need not be that we learn from peers in our field or belonging to our ranks or from our supervisors. Colleagues in different disciplines and work expertise have abundant life experience, which cannot be normally learnt from any structured school lessons. Living is like playing in a playground with people with varied interests, talents, and experience. Advice and small acts exhibited by our fellow colleagues become valuable lessons for us. So, observations play vital part for our personality and professional development.



### **Robert Rameriz**

“Keep on trucking,” says Mr. Robert Rameriz, my colleague at Texas Tech University who helps with maintaining our labs and offices to be clean. While undertaking his daily ritual of maintaining building cleanliness, he engages in little talks which serve as motivation as the work day begins. His life and work ethic are inspirational, which offer good lessons. Having to work multiple jobs to balance his budget, his optimism is infectious. When I and students are stressed out with work and personal pressures, his cheerful talks everyday certainly motivate us. By reading our moods, Robert smiles and entertains with small talks. “Never look back;

keep on marching,” says Robert—much needed advice in times of need. In fact, in his own words, “Keep on trucking—meaning keep on marching.”

### **Learning from Service Providers**

Doctors, nurses, and law enforcement personnel sacrifice so much to save us. Their life and how they deal with complicated scenarios such as dealing with multiple trauma patients, shooting incidents provide ample lessons for us. Calm and courage are hallmarks of their personality, which needs to be imbibed. “Be focused and be bold,” advises Dr. Manickavasagam Sundaram, MD, PhD, who practices medicine in Lakeridge Health, Oshawa, Canada. Having known him for nearly thirty years, I can witness how people like him use analytical and good judgmental skills in dealing with crisis situations. These attributes cannot be easily taught but can certainly be learnt by observing the practitioners. In fact, the Tamil poet Kamban states, being focused is the highlight of noble people, “Ondrinil dri Nitral Uththamar Panbhu.”



#### **Dr. Manickavasagam Sundaram**

“Now that I have been practicing medicine over 20 years, I see a tremendous connection between my relationship with my patients and my ability to see the needs they may have, both medical and otherwise,” stated Dr. Craig Barker, Chief Medical Officer, UMC Physicians, Lubbock, USA.

Having to deal with different people in hospital settings, art of engagement and communication comes to healthcare providers naturally, which can be learnt by observing these service-oriented people. The compassion aspects naturally come to caregivers as they value service as a passion. Amidst being on calls and attending to emergency, physicians like Dr. Manickavasagam Sundaram take time to listen to others and provide comfort and care. I have witnessed such acts of kindness from Dr. Sundaram when I have recently struggled with a medical situation at my home.



## Dr. Craig Barker

Medical training emphasis importance of volunteering and compassion, agrees Dr. Craig Barker. “Medical schools seem to be placing much more emphasis on service organizations and activities outside of the classroom than were available 25 years ago when I was training. I am impressed with the level of importance they give to this in modern times and think that we are heading the right direction. While you cannot train compassion, allowing students to interact with people in many circumstances tends to help them develop more empathy. We should cultivate the compassion that we hope drove them to medicine in the first place,” added Dr. Barker.

### Engagement with Society

Institutes of higher learning now value “Outreach and Engagement,” as important mission. Contributions to the society and tackling problems facing community are taken seriously by them. In medical profession, community medicine and rural healthcare are given due importance. This emphasis has heightened in developed economies during the ongoing pandemic.

I am glad to note that the new higher education policy like the one proposed in India and the experiential education practiced in the United States give flexibility to equip ourselves with service learning.”

Great texts like Thirukkural and Thiruvaimozhi of Namazhvar place importance to “Thondu,” (service). Society is the greatest learning field with varied players with multiple talents and experience. It is up to us to observe and learn!

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