

Seeing Children's Enjoyment

Oyasama says:

"... God is never happy to see the beloved children suffer. . . . God is pleased only to see children enjoy themselves."

Anecdotes of Oyasama, no. 161

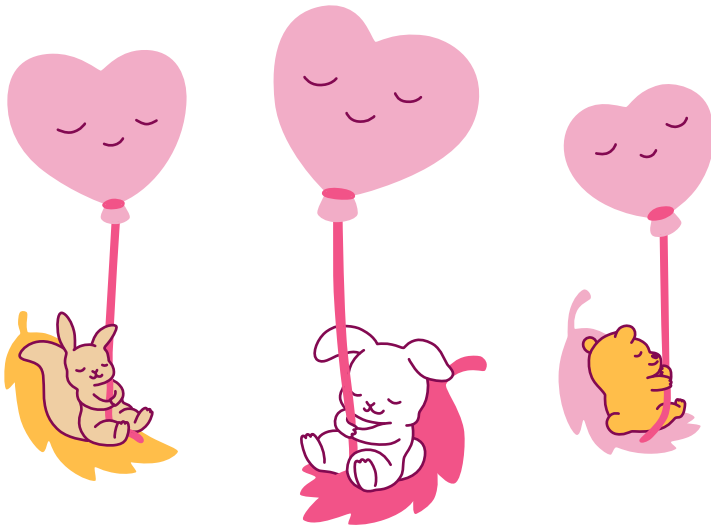
Suppose that you are squeezing a balloon. Pressure on one place causes bulges elsewhere. The harder you squeeze the balloon, the more distorted its shape will be. Squeezing it harder and harder will eventually pop it.



How about the pressures of modern life on our heart and mind? If the heart's cries for help are stifled or suppressed, the increasing intensity of emotions might lead to distorted or negative behavior, such as overeating, heavy drinking, spending sprees, illicit affairs, and gambling. Such behavior may start with thoughts such as "Just once won't hurt; I need to unwind." Yet serious consequences could result, making us even more stressed out than before. We could make up our mind to stop it, only to fail to do so. We could repeat this process, over and over again. Eventually, we might fall into self-loathing.

Some of us might then criticize ourselves based on the teachings of God, saying: "I'm failing to live up to God's expectations." The more serious and earnest we are, the stronger our sense of guilt is. At this point, our faith becomes a burden. We might even start losing the will to live, have an emotional outburst, act recklessly, and so forth. We could snap, just like a balloon that is squeezed too much. Criticizing and blaming ourselves endlessly will not lead to a solution.

Besides, that is not what Oyasama wants us to do. Our spiritual practice is not about burdening our minds but about freeing them from burdens. Oyasama's model path is about finding joy and delight in whatever is happening. "You don't have to make yourself suffer anymore," Oyasama would say, smiling gently. "Haven't you already had more than your share of suffering?" A sense of desperation does not sit well with our spiritual practice.



Just as flowers and plants perfectly blend in and harmonize with the surrounding scenery, perhaps we can blend smoothly into life—rather than fight life. We can become very fond of living. Think about it.

You never know who you are going to meet and what is going to happen today. You can look forward to the unknown.