

Freedom of Mind

Oyasama once told a young man who was visiting Her for the first time in order to thank Her for saving him:

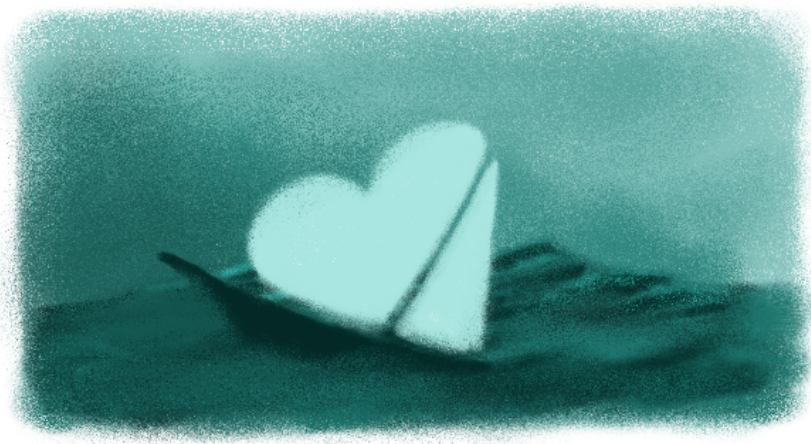
“Go through life without erring. As long as you do not err, in the end, your happiness will exceed all bounds.”

Anecdotes of Oyasama, no. 103

We are like a sailboat that is navigating the ocean.

We cannot change the direction of the wind or current. Sometimes we may encounter a storm or be carried off course by a strong current. We are trying hard to adjust the sail so as to avoid shipwreck. In this analogy, the sail refers to the mind.

Handling the sail—or the mind—can be tricky and requires skill. Sometimes the mind may become anxious and impatient. It might fall prey to temptation. It may suddenly react to a situation with a strong emotion and throw us off balance, just as a sail hit by a sudden strong gust of wind may capsize the boat.



We all like to enjoy ourselves. Our mind likes the experience of delight and joy. One may say that a life without joy is not worth living. This is because we humans were created for the express purpose of living a life filled with joy and wonder. The tricky part is that the mind can easily forget moderation and wallow in pleasure. Self-indulgence can lead to a setback. Our mind may run wild as we indulge in food and drink, shopping, gambling, love affairs, and so forth. We might end up ruining our mind and body, as well as our family and social lives.

That is why Oyasama taught moderation. It is not to be seen as a precept or prohibition. Her path does not provide any specific guidelines for what or how much is allowed. This path respects our freedom of mind and individual autonomy. What moderation does is help us to appreciate what we are blessed with for what it is and to find joy in it without getting caught up in it. Moderation allows us to understand what sufficiency means and to develop our self-discipline; moderation enriches our lives in the process.

Our life's journey is full of possibilities. We would do well to learn how to adjust the sail so that we can catch the wind and enjoy the freedom of sailing on the open ocean.

