

Interdependence

Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. This is the interrelated structure of reality. **Martin Luther King, Jr.**

Life doesn't make any sense without interdependence. We need each other, and the sooner we learn that, the better for us all. **Erik Erikson**

Maturity comes in three stages: dependence, independence and interdependence **Jenna Jameson**

The fundamental law of human beings is interdependence. A person is a person through other persons. **Desmond Tutu**

There is that interdependence and that strength you get from a team, that the group is greater than any individual. **Pete Newell**

Every day I remind myself that my inner and outer life are based on the labors of other men, living and dead, and that I must exert myself in order to give in the same measure as I have received and am still receiving. **Albert Einstein**

Dreams pass into the reality of action. From the actions stems the dream again; and this interdependence produces the highest form of living. **Anais Nin**

Interdependence is about the little things you do. It's not just what you produce, but how you treat the people around you, who labor with you. And there is always something we can do that is positive — ALWAYS. **Ethan Nichtern**

If we look into this sheet of paper even more deeply, we can see the sunshine in it. If the sunshine is not there, the forest cannot grow. In fact, nothing can grow. Even we cannot grow without sunshine. And so, we know that the sunshine is also in this sheet of paper. The paper and the sunshine inter-are. And if we continue to look, we can see the logger who cut the tree and brought it to the mill to be transformed into paper. And we see the wheat. We know the logger cannot exist without his daily bread, and therefore the wheat that became his bread is also in this sheet of paper. And the logger's father and mother are in it too. When we look in this way, we see that without all of these things, this sheet of paper cannot exist.

Looking even more deeply, we can see we are in it too. This is not difficult to see, because when we look at a sheet of paper, the sheet of paper is part of our perception. Your mind is in here and mine is also. So we can say that everything is in here with this sheet of paper. You cannot point out one thing that is not here-time, space, the earth, the rain, the minerals in the soil, the sunshine, the cloud, the river, the heat. Everything co-exists with this sheet of paper. That is why I think the word inter-be should be in the dictionary. "To be" is to inter-be. You cannot just be by yourself alone. You have to inter-be with every other thing. This sheet of paper is, because everything else is.

Thich Nhat Hanh

Interbeing is the understanding that nothing exists separately from anything else. We are all interconnected. By taking care of another person, you take care of yourself. By taking care of yourself, you take care of the other person. Happiness and safety are not individual matters. If you suffer, I suffer. If you are not safe, I am not safe. There is no way for me to be truly happy if you are suffering. If you can smile, I can smile too. The understanding of interbeing is very important. It helps us to remove the illusion of loneliness, and transform the anger that comes from the feeling of separation.

Thich Nhat Hanh

The indigenous understanding has its basis of spirituality in a recognition of the interconnectedness and interdependence of all living things, a holistic and balanced view of the world. All things are bound together. All things connect. What happens to the Earth happens to the children of the earth. Humankind has not woven the web of life; we are but one thread. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. **Rebecca Adamson**

We are all in the same boat, in a stormy sea, and we owe each other a terrible loyalty. **Gilbert K. Chesterton**

Interdependence is a living practice. Courtesy, manners, and right action are the expression of a practice that allows brotherhood to find expression. **Kabir Helminski**

We know from science that nothing in the universe exists as an isolated or independent entity. **Margaret J. Wheatley**

Beyond Fireworks: Celebrating Our Interdependence (excerpt)

How might we celebrate interdependence day? Well, we could spend a few minutes reflecting on all the people "upstream" who help make our freedom possible. Let's see, for me there's Dotie, the local postmaster who sorts my mail. And Cindy at the supermarket who puts the fresh produce on the shelf. And, of course, Susan, the previous owner of this house, who took such good care of it before I moved in. These are all people I know.

There are many more people I don't know. Like the people who helped assemble my Subaru that gives me freedom to drive on icy roads in the winter. Or the people who worked hard at erecting

telephone poles that carry wires that carry my voice for many miles. Or all the people involved in shipping my watch from the factory to the store where my wife bought it for me (even my wife is "upstream" in this case).

When you reflect on your personal freedom you can't help but see the interdependence of life. We depend on people. Lots of people. It's not unusual to find references to "oneness" in the world's great religious traditions and in philosophy. But the type of reflection I'm describing (called Naikan in Japan) brings philosophy down to earth. We realize how connected we are. We realize how supported we are. And we see, in the most practical way, how interdependent we all are.

If you want to take this a step further, try putting a note in a bottle and sending it upstream. Write a thank you note to someone who helps you have more freedom. Let them know you appreciate what they're doing and how much you've benefited from their efforts. Wouldn't it be wonderful if, every Fourth of July, thank you cards, and even small gifts, were sent upstream in recognition of our freedom and interdependence.

Gregg Krech, Spirituality and Practice website

Declaration of Inter-Dependence (poem excerpt)

We mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor...

We're the living who light vigil candles and the cop who didn't shoot. We're the inmate with his volunteer teacher diagramming sentences, the Buddhist alongside the stockbroker serving soup at a shelter. We're the grandfather taking a selfie with his grandson and his husband, the widow's fifty cents in the collection plate and the golfer's ten-thousand-dollar pledge for a cure.

We hold these truths to be self-evident...

We're them. They're you. You're me. We're us: a handshake, a smile good morning on the bus, a door held open, a seat we give up on the subway. We tend restrooms or sell art, make huevos rancheros or herbed salmon, run for mayor or restock shelves, work a backhoe or write poems. We're a poem in progress.

When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people...

to fulfill the promise of being one people, necessary to abolish any government that becomes destructive of these ends, necessary to dissolve the political bans that keep us from speaking to each other, necessary to avow our interdependence, to look straight into each other's eyes the way we behold the moon, and declare to one another: *I see you. I see you. I see you.*

–Richard Blanco

For Reflection and Discussion

A Reflect on your own personal interdependence. Consider intellectual and spiritual teachers, the impact of family members, friends, colleagues, and the communities you are part of.

B Consider the impact of a single choice; e.g., to make bread or to buy a loaf of bread at the supermarket.

C Have there been times in your life when you have felt the reality of interdependence acutely?

D How does your experience at All Souls contribute to your understanding of interdependence?