

## Don't Be Afraid of Mistakes

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation  
Monday, 30 May 2011 09:29

---



### [ [Master's Teachings](#) ]

People are not perfect. We all make mistakes in life. But when we hide our mistakes, they become an inner affliction.

I remember a few decades ago, one male volunteer had trouble getting along with other volunteers. He had quite a strong personality and would often offend people. As a result, people were upset with him. When they complained about him among themselves, unavoidably they would bring up his past, such as how badly he used to treat his wife and children. After learning of his troubles, I approached him about it. He told me, "Master, I used to behave badly before joining Tzu Chi. Now that I have changed, why must people bring up my past again?" I told him, "Instead of having people talk behind your back, why don't you tell people your life story and show them how you have changed?" "How am I supposed to do that? It's so embarrassing to talk about my past." "How about thinking of it as a way to seek self-improvement?" I replied.

He was skeptical about how this could help him. Still, I encouraged him to reveal his faults and errors in front of other volunteers so that people wouldn't talk about him behind his back anymore. One day, at a gathering, he started to talk, "Recently, I offended one of our volunteers. Master said that though I didn't have any bad intentions, my personality was a bit too strong. Actually, besides that person, I have offended a lot of people here too. So, I would like to apologize to all of you. Please forgive me. I know that a lot of people have been talking about my past, so Master said I should tell everybody my life story. Then it'll be out in the open and everyone will know about it." This volunteer then spent some time talking about how bad his behavior had been in his youth, what a good life he had led in the prime of life, how he acted after he got married, how badly he treated his wife and children, and what mistakes he had made in running his business.

After he finished talking, I looked at the volunteers in the room and asked them to put their hands up if they had never made any mistakes in their life. No one raised their hand. I then asked if they had ever made the same mistakes as this volunteer had. Some people answered, "Yes." I told the volunteers that they should be brave and reveal their mistakes to others, just like that male volunteer.

When we're afraid of letting people know of our past wrongs and we bury them in our heart, we create afflictions for ourselves. If we can open our hearts and reveal our faults, if we can repent in front of people and express our determination to transform ourselves, people around us can help us. When they see us about to make the same mistakes again, they can remind us not to repeat them.

This is why we often see Tzu Chi volunteers sharing their life story, talking about the errors they have made in the past and how they have transformed themselves to become the volunteer they are now. With the help of Tzu Chi friends, they learn to overcome fear and develop the

## **Don't Be Afraid of Mistakes**

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation  
Monday, 30 May 2011 09:29

---

courage to improve themselves.

From Dharma Master Cheng Yen's Talks  
Compiled into English by the Jing Si Abode English Editorial Team