

Life, Like a Diamond

Written by Master Cheng Yen
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[[Master's Teachings](#)]

In this world, there are people who see life as a very valuable gift. They feel it to be as precious as a diamond because with it, they can make a contribution to the world and make life better for others. In their thinking, life is to be made use of, and they take care in using it wisely, with love for others.

In Tzu Chi, there are many people who live their lives with such a perspective. And so, they live very fully, seizing every moment available to them to contribute and give. They may serve as mentors to young people, volunteer in the hospital, or visit and care for people in need in their community. Having nurtured a mindset of making the most of life to create good, they think in the same way when faced with the prospect of death. Therefore, they willingly donate their bodies for use in medical education. They know that this means their bodies will be opened up by medical students to study the human body's internal structure. They know that in the process, many incisions will be made to their bodies. But, they say, "The students can make hundreds of wrong cuts on my body—my only hope is that when they become doctors one day, they will never make a single wrong cut on a real patient."

Because of this spirit, these body donors are known by [Tzu Chi University](#)'s medical students as "silent mentors". These silent mentors do not only teach the students about human anatomy. The most important things they teach the students are matters of life, issues of heart.



When medical students begin their human anatomy course at Tzu Chi University, they are introduced to their "silent mentor"—instead of being a nameless cadaver, there is a name and life story connected to every body donor. Knowing about the donor's life and most especially their last wishes in donating their bodies, the students come to understand that the donors willingly made this gift because they wished to relieve the suffering of future patients. With this understanding, the students begin to think more about relieving suffering, and their effort to master medical skills becomes one for the sake of healing patients. The noble calling of the doctor begins to have a place in their hearts, until it becomes an aspiration that comes from deep within them. Then, despite the long and difficult training to become a doctor, they approach it with passion and dedication, because all of it holds meaning. They are motivated onward by the spirit of selfless love for humanity.

Such a spirit is deepened through the students' opportunity to visit their silent mentor's family members. Going to the house of the family members, they hear about what kind of person the silent mentor was while alive. All this brings home to them the greatness of such an act of giving, the great compassion and wisdom behind it. For many people in society, it is hard enough to donate their hard-earned money to charity, much less to donate their own body. And,

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most people are not willing to let their body or the body of their loved ones be handed over to others, much less to be used for incisions and practice. It takes a certain kind of insight to rise above all these attachments and understand the value of such a donation. It also takes profound wisdom and compassion to be able to really let go and give, for both the body donor and the family members.

Experiences such as these provide very rich learning for the students. They open the students to life, to their fellow human beings. The spirit of gratitude, respect, and love toward humanity begins to grow in their hearts. They discover life's value and meaning. Then, after completing their training, they make the most of their training and skills to serve humanity, by being a humane doctor.

Indeed, when people understand life's value and meaning, they will make use of their lives wisely, to bring benefit to others. Like the body donors, they may be but ordinary people. But, ordinary though they may be, they nevertheless have the power to awaken in others an understanding of life and a selfless love toward humanity, such as with the medical students. Awakened, these others will go on to make use of their life to benefit humanity.

Isn't such a life like a diamond?

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