

## Focus on Building Yourself Rather Than Destroying Others

*Shôn Ellerton, July 23, 2020*

*If we could all focus on building our successes rather than dismantling the success of others, the world would be a better place.*



When I was growing up, I was taught that if you want to make a success of yourself, you need to build it. There is no doubt that I had some help in doing so, but ultimately, if I was not willing to make the effort, no one else was going to do that for me.

There was another equally important concept I was taught. Stop focussing your efforts in destroying or dismantling someone else's idea, product or workmanship and, instead, build up your own. Young children, particularly that of siblings, do experience from time to time a need to be better than the other, to exercise their competitive nature. For example, during my childhood, I remember an occasion when my friend and I were playing with Lego, creating buildings, spaceships and other typical things young boys at that age usually have a fascination with. Somehow or another, we got into an argument over which spaceship looked the coolest or something so terribly insignificant, as is often the case with kids. The immediate reaction was to start destroying each other's creations instead of improving our own. The outcome was predictable. The only thing left standing was a ruin of a Lego building, the rest of what we created having been pulled apart and scattered over the carpet floor in anger and frustration.

As parents, we guide our children to be constructive rather than destructive. When two kids fight over a toy and it suddenly breaks, sympathy often runs thin from parents who will usually then admonish the children stating that there is

now *no* toy to play with and that it shall not be replaced. When a child is asked to paint a picture at school, the teacher will encourage the child not to copy from others but rather, to try his or her best. Certainly, children are encouraged to gain inspiration from other drawings created by other children, but they are never encouraged to belittle or destroy the work from others.

Along comes adulthood, and one would think, that we should know better than to topple down, denigrate, belittle or destroy the works of others in order to raise one's own work on a pedestal having the competition removed. In the world of warfare or corporate hostile takeovers, this *does* happen of course. Reading Sun Tzu's *Art of War* or Machiavelli's *The Prince* alludes to this strategy many times; however, neither of them proclaim that this strategy take place without the balance of building up your own strength. To solely focus on taking down the ramparts of the enemy without taking stock of your own situation is foolhardy often resulting in a great weakening on both sides.

Nowhere is this more prevalent in today's modern politics and mainstream news media. The clearest example in a weakening of both sides could arguably be what is now taking place in the United States. As of writing, Trump frequently tweets or posts three simple words: '*LAW AND ORDER!*'. Not surprisingly, thousands of comments flood in from Trump supporters for just tweeting or posting out these three simple words as if they are sitting amongst the spectators watching a gladiatorial combat in ancient Rome. Many of his other posts are basic *ad hominem* attacks on his opponent, Joe Biden. Whereas we do not see so much in the way of all out attacks directly from Biden to Trump, the Democratic Party along with its strong grip on much of mainstream media make sure that most of its energy is focussed to pull down Trump. The unfortunate side effect is that, because so much effort and focus is directed on tearing down the opposition, the Democrats have been derelict with respect to building a strong platform of their own along with a decent selection of candidates to choose from. I strongly believe if the Democrats had focussed their energy on building on what they stand for and searching for strong candidates rather than pitting all its energy on the destruction of the Trump party, they would be in a much stronger position. Many Americans are disenfranchised at the prospect of having to choose between either of these candidates as the next president of the United States.

Escaping politics, the negative attitude of taking great effort to tear down or denounce works of others rears its ugly head in the world of social media.

Online trolls, particularly those who choose to remain hidden behind a wall of anonymity, take on this attitude with fervour and spontaneity. Bloggers and vloggers are often the target of trolls who are intent to denounce, take apart or attempt to remove material off the platform. Trolls seldom ever have any material of their own or do they have any intention of building up any counter arguments in a constructive way. Their only cause is to demoralise and demonise works created by others and to ‘shout’ very loudly in order to capture a following of other likeminded trolls. Ultimately, what ensues is the birth of a cult with absolutely no useful or productive output. Nothing is created, because anything that is created gets destroyed.

Many of us have, at one time or another, wondered what it would be like to be as successful as, for example, Jeff Bezos or Bill Gates. Perhaps, closer to home, many of us are wondering how that friend and neighbour on the same street has done so well in building up a business and living in a large house fronted by a couple of sporty cars parked on the driveway. The more positive of us would think on the lines of what one would need to do to be as successful as the neighbour. How could one capitalise on one’s own efforts and assets to make a success? Could one benefit from self-training to learn new skills? What about networking and mingling with those who are successful? All these sorts of questions are raised in so many self-help business books and seminars, but all the solutions that are presented often require a considerable degree of effort and perseverance to work effectively. However, the negative among us prefer to take the seemingly easier path of dwelling on how to remove the pillars of success from others. It can take a surprisingly small amount of force to do so particularly when the subject of success is well-established in the public eye. Take the case of J.K. Rowling of *Harry Potter* fame, who could be, perhaps, one of the greatest writers of all time within its genre. It only took one small controversial tweet from Rowling on the subject of gender and sex to amass an army of left-radical crazies who want nothing better than for her to be humiliated, silenced and disgraced and to have all her works to be boycotted by libraries, retailers and publishers. These crazies, of course, have nothing to lose.

Many of us regularly encounter behaviours intent on belittling or denouncing others rather than building up themselves. This behaviour is damaging, destructive and counterproductive; however, most of us are guilty of it on occasion. When it does occur, it can be excused provided one reflects on this behaviour and seeks admission to making an error of judgment and to make

amends with the victim to which the behaviour is directed to. We are all, of course, human and it is part of our nature to exhibit such tendencies from time to time, but it should be infrequent and seldom when it does occur. If we spend more time being positive and to build ourselves up rather the other way around, the overall trend is that we can all move forwards and not backwards. It is the very definition of civilisation.