

THE WISDOM OF "I DO NOT KNOW"

Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski

Accustom your tongue to say "I do not know" (Berachos 4a).

While no human being can know everything, some people cannot admit any ignorance about anything. For them, any admission of lack of knowledge threatens their fragile egos. Although they try to impress others with their omniscience, they accomplish the reverse, because the more they try to conceal their ignorance, the more prominent it becomes.

Furthermore, the only way we can acquire knowledge is by accepting that we do not have it. People who claim to know everything cannot learn. Therefore, many opportunities to learn pass them by, and their denying their ignorance actually increases their ignorance.

We do not have to know everything, and no one expects us to. Today, more than ever, with the unprecedented amount of information available, no one can be a universal genius. The simple statement, "I don't know," is actually highly respected.

We should also open ourselves to acquiring knowledge from every source. Learning from someone whom we consider to be inferior to ourselves should not be demeaning. As the Psalmist says, "I became wise by learning from all my teachers" (Psalms 119:99). A willingness to learn from everyone is a sign of greatness, while affecting omniscience actually betrays ignorance.

Growing Each Day,

6 Iyar (April 16)

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