How Am I Doing?

Former Mayor of New York City, Ed Koch, used a gimmick that was very popular with voters. We do this too, and that’s what we’ll study here now.

Whenever he was in public, Mr. Koch would ask, “How am I doing?” For quite a while people responded with thumbs up and he remained their popular Mayor.

Sooner or later, though, the crowd always turns, and Ed Koch was ousted. On the surface we say, “Well, that’s just the way the system operates ....” And, this is probably a good system when it comes to running government. But what about us — personally?

Isn’t the gimmick that former Mayor Ed Koch verbalized exactly what we do internally? Don’t we judge how we’re doing in relation to people, places, and events outside us? And don’t we let that comparison determine how we feel inside?

Examples are overwhelming, but let’s take just a few. Would any of the following events have an impact on how you feel inwardly? Your car doesn’t start in the morning, a tire goes flat on your way to an appointment, your check bounces, your daughter’s school calls to tell you she’s been skipping classes, you don’t get that raise you counted on, you get laid off, you get a speeding ticket on the way home . . .

And this picture has a second side: You do get the raise you counted on, a policeman smiles and waves at you, your daughter makes the dean’s list, you win the lottery . . .

Be Your Own Person

Doesn’t a part of you know that there’s a better way to live than like a boat on the ocean — bobbing up and down with every wave that passes? There is. Instead of being on the undulating boat, the real you is above it. The mere fact that you are capable of seeing yourself rising and falling with the tides means that you are separate from the tossing boat. Then why are we elated one minute and depressed the next? Because we forget! It’s that simple. Most people never heard these ideas expressed in practical ways before, but even those of us who have been introduced to these higher facts forget. We get caught up and distracted on our little boats, trying to stay upright and steer to calm waters, when all we need to do is remember that we can leave that picture entirely and calmly watch from above it all. The famous passage “Resist not evil” refers to our ability to observe from this special vantage point.
So the next time — which will likely occur before the day is out — you’re in any state at all — anger, elation, worry, or loneliness — remember that you can separate yourself from it and simply watch calmly from the sidelines. Say to yourself, “Oh, look, there’s that depressed state coming on again,” or, “Now here’s the happy me .....” See that the entity by your name is actually made up of many different personalities and that you’re continually flipping from one to another throughout the day. When you remember to do this, you’ll know that you’re not the depression, just as you’re not the elated feelings.

So make it a practice to try to catch the number of “I’s” that act in your name, and identify as many of them as you can. As you begin to, as Socrates said, “Know Thyself,” you’ll automatically begin to understand all that’s been puzzling you as well.