

Dignity as an Achievement

A PRACTICAL CONCEPTION OF HUMAN DIGNITY

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DIGNITY IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Mary and her best friend, Kim, have a troubled relationship. Mary helps Kim achieve her goals, values her input, and respects her boundaries. However, Kim has little respect for Mary. She belittles her, cancels their plans last-minute, and asks for Mary's input just to do the opposite.

This hurts Mary's self-esteem and makes her question her value and dignity. Mary's other friends pity her, but say that she's wrong to tolerate Kim's behavior, and that willingly putting up with it shows a lack of self-respect.

When Mary chooses to practice self-respect by cutting contact with Kim, she realizes that leaving this damaging dynamic helped her regain her dignity. Once again, she feels valuable and free to make her own choices.



But what is dignity?

CONCEPTIONS OF DIGNITY

The Traditional View

What is dignity?

- A characteristic
- Intrinsic, rooted in human value
- Respect is the appropriate response

What is it missing?

- Fixed, unchanging
- Misunderstands autonomy
- The importance of respect

My Conception: Dignity as an Achievement

What is it?

- Something individuals achieve together
- Owed to all people
- Respect is a necessity

What are the advantages?

- Affected by our actions
- Autonomy must be secured
- Explains why respect matters

ROADMAP OF THE ARGUMENT

Section I

Introduction: The Need to Redefine Dignity

What does the traditional conception say about what dignity is?

Why do we need a new conception of dignity?

Section II

Respect and Dignity: What is their relationship?

2.1 A Traditional View of Respect

2.2. The Obligation to Respect Others

2.3 An Alternative to the Traditional Picture of Respect and Dignity

What is respect?

What do we mean when we describe respect as an obligation?

Section III

The Moral Import of Dignity

3.1 Dignity and Human Value: Distinct but Related

3.2 Human Value Distinguished from Dignity

Why are we obligated to respect people?

Section IV

An Alternate Conception of Dignity

4.1 Dignity, Relationships, and Interactions

4.2 Do Competing Aims make Achieving Dignity

Impossible?

4.3 & 4.4 Other Conceptions of Dignity

How do our actions affect others' dignity?

How do we achieve autonomy?

What does it mean to achieve dignity?

Section V

Looking Ahead

How can understanding dignity as something we achieve inform...

our everyday lives?

our relationships?

political decisions?

Thank you!

ATTRIBUTIONS:

Stock Image: [Vecteezy.com](https://www.vecteezy.com)

Format Template: [Canva.com](https://www.canva.com)

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