



Courage
 MyQuest
 Wisdom
 By Daniel Labbe



Today's Quote: "True joy is claiming the freedom to be who you are," Marcia Reynolds

Do better!
 Be better!
 Get more!

This quote caught my attention because so few of us have been encouraged to be ourselves. Popular culture tells us to improve ourselves, become someone special, or to overcome our shortcomings. But how healthy is this striving to be someone special? Does this effort bring us joy or just more pain and striving?

As a child I felt like a total reject, the mascot for the island of misfit toys. There was a deep sense that something was definitely wrong with me, and I always felt inadequate.

This sense of unworthiness stuck with me and shaped my personality as a teen and a young adult. I hated feeling this way, and it wasn't until recently that I was able to see it as the illusion that it was. You see, there wasn't anything wrong with me at all, but this fact isn't what shaped my young ^{adult} ~~adult~~ ~~years~~ years, years filled with anger, addiction, and dysfunction. It was the illusion that molded that life, the illusion of unworthiness.

How do you know who you are if you're always trying to be something better?

I think we all struggle with this illusion to some degree. For myself it was so real that it never even occurred to me to question it. But once I started to investigate it I discovered something amazing. The illusion had control over my entire life, and its impact was devastating.

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When I was young I was filled with anger, sadness, grief, and humiliation. These feelings were so intense and so consistent that I had little energy left to be the happy, outgoing, and self-confident kid others wanted me to be. I was always told to cheer-up, don't be so shy, and don't be so angry. In other words - don't be your natural self, it just isn't good enough.

The epiphany of a lifetime!

And that's how my sense of unworthiness was born. I was shy, sensitive, defensive, and awkward, so it seemed to make sense that something must be wrong with me. It wasn't until more recently that I discovered something that truly changed my life. It is totally natural for a child growing up in an ~~abusive~~ abusive, poverty-stricken, alcoholic, and dysfunctional home to feel angry, lonely, humiliated, and sad. It was perfectly normal to be wary of people and hyper-sensitive to stress, to be defensive and introverted, even though school teachers, peers, popular culture, and well-meaning family members continuously told me not to feel that way. But how was I supposed to know that?

It's super-man!

After years of dysfunction and trying to drown out that feeling of inadequacy I began a self-improvement effort. This is the other end of the extreme. Due to my unquestioned belief that I was ~~in~~ defective and in need of much fixing I poured my energy into ~~sets~~ applying self-help techniques and "fixing" myself in therapy. It was truly a heroic effort, and I got some good results from it. But I also caused myself a lot of pain. When you believe you ~~are~~ are defective or inadequate or just "not good

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Do this but not that, believe this, don't believe that

What if who you are is already perfectly and uniquely beautiful?

Maybe our shortcomings are the result of this effort to be someone better

enough yet" You continue to focus on improving just one more thing in order to allow yourself to be happy. The truth is, no achieved goal will ever be good enough on this path. Also, this striving creates a variety of pernicious coping skills and habits because the whole effort is unrealistic. In order to cope with the impossibility of achieving your ideal and the stress the whole effort creates you pick-up more unhealthy habits like overeating or being rigid in your beliefs or having unrealistic expectations.

Don't get me wrong, I had - and still have - a lot of work to do, but much of this work is about undoing the damage of a belief in unworthiness. Today, I'm not working on becoming a better person. You see, it is my belief that who I am, who each of us is, at the deepest level is a good, unique, beautiful being and my work today is to uncover that natural self.

Maybe, if I can learn to ~~be~~ become aware of all the ways I try to protect myself ~~and~~ from feeling those ever so raw emotions that characterized my childhood, just allow them rather than react to them. And if I can let go of thinking I need to become something other than who I truly am; if I can let go of all the ways I've learned to act like someone special... well, maybe I will discover the special person I already am.

In Stephen Levine's book A Gradual Awakening, he writes, "I see in some of the most beautiful beings I know that the hottest fire they have to work with is their sense of unworthiness."

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Rather than focus on becoming "better" what would happen if we could remove all that obscures our true self? What would we find?

How much energy do we put into becoming someone special, someone "better" or more likable? And how much pain does this effort cause us? We need the nice car, the big house, the coolest clothes, the right friends... why? Because we're not good enough as we are? Maybe our undesirable traits or habits are the result of our sense of unworthiness and ~~our~~ frenzied attempts to become "better." Maybe if we just let go of the intense effort to improve ourselves, let go of reacting, we just might find a ~~perfect~~ perfectly beautiful being... maybe we will find our true self.

Learn to trust in your natural being

See all short-comings as a result of the belief in unworthiness or "not good enough yet"

Do you have a sense of unworthiness coloring your life? It may be hard to tell at first. Here are some ways you can tell:

Are you continually seeking a better body, a better job, partner, or more possessions?

Do you seek to "fix" yourself in therapy, or do you use therapy to help you discover your natural, healthy self?

Do you feel inadequate or did you as a child? Are you constantly seeking ways to feel better, to live better, or to feel better?

Investigate these questions and see if you might be overcompensating due to the illusion of unworthiness.

Please share your experience or leave a comment about ~~the~~ the blog.

"You can search the whole universe for a being more worthy of love than yourself, but you won't find one"

- The Buddha.