

"Because true belonging only happens when we present our authentic, imperfect selves to the world, our sense of belonging can never be greater than our level of self-acceptance." Dr. Brene Brown

"A lot of the conflict you have in your life exists simply because you're not living in alignment; you're not being true to yourself." — Steve Maraboli,

*On your way up,
is being Trendy more Important*

than being Authentic?
Stay true to you if you wish to be joy-filled!



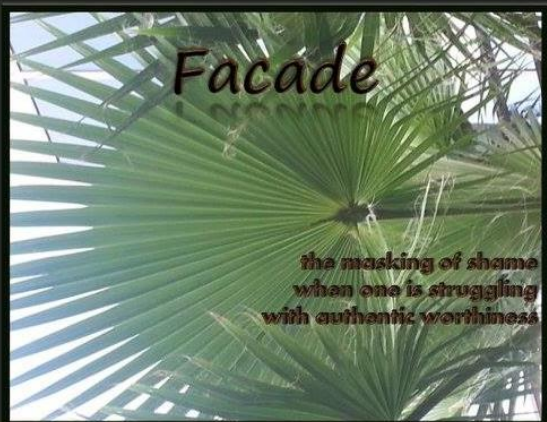
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Be Your Authentic Self!



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*the masking of shame
when one is struggling
with authentic worthiness*



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Changing Lives by Creating Pathways for Mental Wellness
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*TH Wellness Project's Vision:
to empower personal well-being, improve mental wellness and increase life joy.*
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Maintaining Authenticity in the Real World

Letting Go of What People Think

- Authenticity is not something we do or don't have. It's a practice - a conscious choice of how we want to live.
- Often people attempt to live their lives backwards.
 - They believe having more things enables you to do more of what you want in order to be happier.
 - The reality is the reverse. You must first be who you really are, then do what you really need to do, in order to have what you want.
- Key points:
 - Show up and be real
 - Be honest
 - Let our true selves be seen
- The reality: There are people who practice authenticity (that doesn't mean perfect) and there are people who don't.
 - When are the days/situations that you are not so authentic?
 - If we are full of self-doubt or shame, we can sell ourselves out and be anybody others need us to be.

Choosing Authenticity

- It can make us feel Hopeful & Exhausted
 - We feel hopeful because being real is something we value. What are some characteristics in people that we are drawn to? Do we aspire to be like that in our own lives?
 - We feel exhausted because choosing authenticity in a culture that dictates everything, from how much we're supposed to weigh to what our houses are supposed to look like, is a huge undertaking.
- Choosing Authenticity means:
 - Cultivating courage to be imperfect, to set boundaries, and to allow ourselves to be vulnerable.
 - Exercising the compassion that comes from knowing that we are all imperfect.
 - Nurturing the connection and sense of belonging that can only happen when we believe that we are enough.
- Authenticity demands living in Wellness even when:
 - It's hard, and/or we're wrestling with the shame and fear of not being good enough.
 - We're experiencing intense positive emotions – we can be afraid to let ourselves feel those because of the anticipation of them going away.
- Mindfully practicing authenticity during our most soul-searching struggles is how we invite grace, joy and gratitude into our lives.
- Choosing authenticity is not an easy choice! E.E. Cummings wrote: "To be nobody-but-yourself in a world which is doing its best, night and day, to make you everybody but yourself- means to fight the hardest battle which any human being can fight- and never stop fighting." Staying real is one of the most courageous battles that we'll ever fight.
- When we choose to be true to ourselves, the people around us will struggle to make sense of how and why we are changing. They might feel fearful and unsure about the changes they are seeing. They may worry about how our authenticity practice will affect them and our relationships with them.



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Will People Embrace our Authentic Self?

- Sometimes, when we push the system, it pushes back. This can be everything from eye rolls and whispers to relationship struggles and feelings of isolation. There can also be cruel and shaming responses to our authentic voices.
- Authenticity isn't always the safe option. It means stepping out of our comfort zone.

The Struggle

- Don't make people feel uncomfortable but be honest.
- Sound informed and educated but not like a know-it-all.
- Don't say anything unpopular or controversial but have the courage to disagree with the crowd.
- It's easy to attack and criticize someone while he/she is risk-taking. Cruelty is cheap, easy and rampant.
- As we struggle to be authentic and brave, it's important to remember that cruelty hurts, even when untrue. When we go against the grain some people will feel threatened and they will go after what hurts the most. The problem is when we don't care at all what people think and we're immune to hurt, we're also ineffective at connecting.

Gender Differences

- Men and women both struggle with our culture's gender expectations.
 - Women: What are some qualities that society tells us are important for us to feel feminine?
 - Men: What are some qualities that society tells us are important for us to feel masculine?

Courage

- Courage is telling our story, not being immune to criticism.
- Staying vulnerable is a risk we have to take if we want to experience connection.
- There's risk involved in putting your true self out in the world, but there's even more risk in hiding yourself and your gifts from the world. Our true selves don't just go away. They are likely to fester and eat away at our worthiness.

Caution

- If you trade in your authenticity for safety, you may experience the following: anxiety, depression, eating disorders, addiction, rage, blame, resentment, and inexplicable grief.
- Sacrificing who we are for the sake of what other people think just isn't worth it. Being true to ourselves is the best gift we can give the people we love. When we let go of trying to be everything to everyone, we have much more time, attention, love, and connection for the important people in our lives.

Time for Authentic Connections

- If possible, partner with someone you don't know. Let's start building new, healthy connections!
 - As you are sharing with each other, talk about the differences between the You that you present to the public and/or in professional settings and how that differs from your Authentic self.
 - Be respectful – be mindful of sharing 'enough' with healthy limits.
 - If you are comfortable, talk about what "Support" looks like for you.

Wrap Up

"The privilege of a lifetime is to become who you truly are." - C.G. Jung



Facilitator's Guide:

FOLLOW UP ON HOMEWORK:

- Questionnaire that would provide yourself and facilitators with useful information to help make this a more meaningful learning experience.
- Start developing your Worthiness List.

BREAK UP INTO GROUPS OF 2-3:

1. **HOW DOES WHAT OTHERS THINK INFLUENCE YOUR BEHAVIOR & SENSE OF WORTHINESS?**
2. **WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AUTHENTIC?**
3. **WHY IS BEING AUTHENTIC SO CHALLENGING?**
4. **IN WHAT SITUATIONS IS BEING YOU MOST DIFFICULT?**
5. **WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU'RE NOT AUTHENTIC?**
6. **WHAT ARE THE RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH BEING YOUR HONEST, AUTHENTIC SELF?**
7. **WHEN IS IT SAFE TO BE AUTHENTIC?**

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT:

- Be mindful... Record the times over the next week when you've been able to be more authentic. How did that impact your sense of well-being?

