

Quality #6: Self Esteem

The Need to Impress, Pretend, Feel Shame and Fear

The challenge is to simply BE, to be real and genuine without the need to impress, the need to feel ashamed, the need to pretend, or the need to fear. It is to be transparent to these needs so that we bring who we “really are” to any given situation or challenge.

Why is this so important? Imagine a hot air balloon tethered to the ground by four large ropes each tied off on large wooden stake. Can we feel the balloon struggling to lift off, wanting to soar, but unable to do so because the tethers are holding it down? Feel the tension between the potential in the balloon and the restraint of the tethers. Finally the ropes snap and the balloon lifts with ease higher and higher until its occupants can view what appears to be the entire earth.

So it is with our lives. The need to impress, feel ashamed, pretend, and fear keep us tethered, unable to succeed. These tethers rob us, and those around us of the infinity of our intrinsic power. Our true potential lies idle, untapped, and unused. Oh, we may create money but we will never be wealthy. We will always be wanting for more because the “more” is beyond the tethers and always will be.

Until now, we may have believed that success is contingent on our ability to tenaciously cling to these tethers. Fake it until we make it. We may even fear that nothing would be left should we surrender. Some

may have even built the very foundation of their existence, their image, roles, and status using these restrictive thought processes.

Real power is in being real and genuine and authentic. In doing so our intrinsic power is released. Real power cannot be faked or manipulated. The surrender is real and the benefits beyond price. It is our goal to introduce you to the unknown for when you become aware of the possibilities the gains made while being tethered will seem puny and insignificant regardless of how others may have perceived their magnitude.

You will more clearly recognize why there has been a flame burning inside you, as discussed by Og, “which has been passed from generations uncounted.” A flame that has been “a constant irritation to your spirit to be better than you are and you will be” and in so doing find the intrinsic motivation to shed your tethers and soar.

First, let us clear up one common misconception about personal development. Personal development is not about spending endless hours in self-absorbed, self-centric examination. We cannot go down that black hole deep enough to find answers, the “why did this happen to me” and if we could we would still need to make the decision to move forward. Personal development is about freeing ourselves and becoming whole and complete so that we can better serve others. It is about changing the focus from compensation to quality service. It is about coming to a task with all of your potential, all of your genius, all of your genuineness, all of your creativity, free from the need to impress,

feel ashamed, pretend, and fear. It is about experiencing the profound joy that can come only through maximizing your true potential.

At times we find ourselves being compensated in money for this service, other times in long lasting relationships, and other times with cleaner air and safer streets, but the focus will be bringing all of us to the service of others. That is where the joy is that can fill that awful void in our souls.

Impress

If our thought processes think that we are not enough - that we do not measure up to expectations, we may be tempted to overcompensate by emphasizing the magnitude of our possessions, contributions, or the importance of our ideas and opinions. If we listen to these thoughts and act accordingly, we may engage in vain attempts to secure attention, admiration, or respect – the very things we may think are missing.

In **Scroll IV: *I am nature's greatest miracle***; Og gives us some sage wisdom. Og writes, *"Nevermore will I be satisfied with yesterday's accomplishments nor will I indulge, anymore, in self-praise for deeds which in reality are too small to even acknowledge. I can accomplish far more than I have, and I will, for why should the miracle which produced me end with my birth? Why can I not extend that miracle to my deeds of today? I am nature's greatest miracle."* In Scroll VIII, Og wraps up this topic with the following, *"Yet, never will I proclaim my accomplishments."*

Let the world, instead, approach me with praise and may I have the wisdom to receive it in humility."

Consider in what ways might we attempt to impress others? Have you ever done this? If so, what was your primary motive? What impact might this motive have on another person? What impact might this have on your ability to Intrinsically Validate this person?

Pretend

When our thoughts are balanced, they will support us in living in the now. When out of balance, these thoughts struggle with the difference between the expectations created by our vivid visualizations and what is real in our life. This gap can be painful especially when life falls short. When this occurs, our thoughts may think that we are not enough - we are "less than." We may be tempted to overcompensate by exaggerating "what is" - making it seem bigger or more important than it is in an attempt to make up the difference.

In **Scroll IV: *I am nature's greatest miracle***, Og encourages us to be real. He writes, "*Vain attempts to imitate others no longer will I make. Instead will I place my uniqueness on display in the market place. I will proclaim it, yea, I will sell it. I will begin now to accent my differences; hide my similarities... different from all others, and proud of the difference. I am nature's greatest miracle. I am rare, and there is value in all rarity; therefore, I am valuable.*"

Consider in what ways might we attempt to pretend? Have you ever attempted to pretend? If so, what was your primary motive? What impact might this motive have on another person? What impact might this have on your attempts to Intrinsically Validate people?

Feel Shame

We have all made mistakes – missed the mark - fallen short of expectations. Some of these expectations were unrealistic, others realistic. “What is” is “what is.” Og Mandino tells the following story about his life.

Og: I returned to the United States, after the war had ended, and discovered quickly that there wasn't much of an employment market for bombardiers with only a high school education. After many months of unemployment checks and painful searching, I finally secured a job selling life insurance and married the lady I had been dating before I went to war.

The following ten years were a living hell . . . for me, for her, and even for the lovely daughter we had been blessed with. It seemed that no matter how many hours of the day and night I worked, struggling to sell insurance, we drifted deeper and deeper into debt and I began to do what so many frustrated individuals still do today, to hide from their problems.

On the way home, after a long day of sales calls and canvassing for business, I would stop at a barroom for a drink. After all, I deserved it, didn't I, following such a tough day? Well, soon one drink became two, two

became four, four became six and finally my wife and daughter, when they could no longer endure my behavior, left me.

The following two years are no more than a hazy memory. I traveled the country in my old Ford, doing any kind of odd jobs in order to earn enough for another bottle of cheap wine and I spent countless drunken nights in gutters, a sorry wretch of a human being, in a living hell.

Then, one cold wintry morning in Cleveland, one I shall never forget, I almost took my life. I had passed the window of a dingy pawn shop and paused when I saw, inside on a shelf, a small handgun. Attached to its barrel was a yellow tag . . . \$29. I reached into my pocket and removed three ten dollar bills . . . all I had in the world and I thought . . . “There’s the answer to all my problems. I’ll buy that gun, get a couple of bullets and take them back to that dingy room where I’m staying. Then I’ll put the bullets in the gun, put the gun to my head. . . and pull the trigger. . . and I’ll never have to face that miserable failure in the mirror again.”

I don’t know what happened next. I joke about it now and say that I was such a spineless individual at that time that I couldn’t even muster enough courage to do away with myself. In any event, I didn’t buy that gun. As the snow was falling I turned away from the pawn shop and commenced walking until I eventually found myself inside a public library. It was so warm after the outside chills of November.

I began wandering among the thousands of books until I found myself standing in front of the shelves containing scores of volumes on self-help, success, and motivation. I selected several of them, went to a nearby table and commenced reading, searching for some answers. Where had I gone wrong? Could I make it with just a high school education? Was there any hope for me? What about my drinking problem? Was it too late for me? Was I doomed now to a life of frustration, failure, and tears? – Og Mandino

Ten years later and while serving as the editor for Success Magazine, Og would write *The Greatest Salesman in the World*. In **Scroll V: *I will live this day as if it is my last***, and speaking from experience, Og points the way. He writes, “Can sand flow upward in the hourglass? Will the sun rise where it sets and set where it rises? Can I relive the errors of yesterday and right them? Can I call back yesterday’s wounds and make them whole? Can I become younger than yesterday? Can I take back the evil that was spoken, the blows that were struck, the pain that was caused? No. Yesterday is buried forever and I will think of it no more. I will live this day as if it is my last. If you are experiencing shame, this can be a very private matter.

If you are comfortable, consider the following. How long have you been holding on to this shame? How can shame make it difficult to accurately assess, unconditionally accept, and intrinsically value YOU? How can shame keep you from being present in the now, fully engaged, valuing others by stepping into their world? How can holding on to the past keep you from living in the present?

Fear

The fear of which we speak is not created by a real or present danger. This fear exists only in our mind. Again, expectations appear to be very real in your mind. They are so real that when these expectations are threatened, your body reacts physiologically. As a result of this reaction at a cellular level, you may feel anxious, stressed, frustrated, or even depressed. It is easy to misread these emotions as “evidence” that the threat is real – that there truly is pending doom. Thus, as stated by an unknown author, fear is False Evidence Appearing Real.

This kind of fear is a reaction to an emotion created by a threat to an expectation – nothing more. Learn to let go of expectations and learn to love and live in the NOW and this kind of fear will vanish.

In **Scroll V: *I will live this day as if it is my last***, Og asks some poignant questions. He writes, “*Should I concern myself over events which I may never witness? Should I torment myself with problems that may never come to pass? No! Tomorrow lies buried with yesterday, and I will think of it no more. I will live this day as if it is my last.*”

Consider your current circumstances. Identify expectations that if threatened could cause this kind of fear? What would it be like to let go of these expectations and live life without this kind of fear?

In past generations, it was a commonly held belief that fear, obligation, and perfection were healthy ways to motivate people. Now we know differently. However, many people grew up in this kind of environment where no matter how hard they worked; no matter how good they were, no matter how well they performed, it was never good enough. In this environment, driven by the unrealistic expectations of others, a person can be “conditioned” to think they are not enough. This conditioning can also be extended to current life experiences.

It is also possible that when someone excels, others may feel threatened or embarrassed. Some people may actually expect us to be “less than” we are. If we have been conditioned this way, we may overcompensate by projecting guilt and shame as a response to our success.

In **Scroll IV: *I am nature’s greatest miracle***, Og asks us to step back and consider our uniqueness. Og writes, “*Since the beginning of time never has there been another with my mind, my heart, my eyes, my ears, my hands, my hair, my mouth. None that came before, none that live today, and none that come tomorrow can walk and talk and move and think exactly like me. All men are my brothers yet I am different from each. I am a unique creature. I am nature’s greatest miracle.*” Og goes on to write, as previously quoted, “*I am rare, and there is value in all rarity; therefore, I am valuable.*”

In what ways can our environment impact our self worth? Were you raised in a supportive and healthy environment? If not, what impact

has this had on your life? Are your contributions, ideas, and opinions valued? How difficult is it to establish healthy boundaries? Do you ever feel obligated to sacrifice your time, energy, or even your well being to serve others?

It is not uncommon for people to experience emotional, physical, or even sexual abuse in childhood or adulthood. These traumatic events can cause people to question their worthiness and value. Abuse can be a real and present danger and should not be confused with fear that exists only in our mind. If you are struggling with self esteem questions caused by past or current abuse, especially if your personal safety is at risk, seek immediate assistance from those with the knowledge, expertise, and the power to help you. You don't have to do it alone.

To be real, genuine, and authentic you will want to let go of the need to impress, pretend, feel ashamed, and fear. The most important of all is to let go of fear. Fear can be the result of a real and present danger in the example of abuse or it can be from false evidence appearing real. In either event, fear is the primary driver of the other three tethers - the need to impress, pretend, or feel ashamed.