

Authenticity

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Chalice Lighting and Opening Reading

“The privilege of a lifetime is to become who you truly are.” ~ Carl Jung

“Real isn't how you are made,” said the Skin Horse. “It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real.”

“Does it hurt?” asked the Rabbit.

“Sometimes,” said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. “When you are Real you don't mind being hurt.”

“Does it happen all at once, like being wound up,” he asked, “or bit by bit?”

“It doesn't happen all at once,” said the Skin Horse. “You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand.”

~ Margery Williams, The Velveteen Rabbit

“Honesty and transparency make you vulnerable. Be honest and transparent anyway.” ~ Mother Theresa

“I believe one of our soul's major purposes is to know, love, and express our authentic selves. To live the life and be the person we were created to be. However, our true selves only emerge when it's safe to do so. Self-condemnation, shame, and guilt send your true nature into hiding. It's only in the safety of gentle curiosity, encouragement, and self-love that your soul can bloom as it was created to do.”

~ Sue Patton Thoele

“No one man can, for any considerable time, wear one face to himself, and another to the multitude, without finally getting bewildered as to which is the true one.” ~ Nathaniel Hawthorne

Check in – How are things with you right now? This is a time to mention briefly any major issue or event weighing on your mind that you would like to share with the group.

Focus Reading

What it means to be authentic, by Sue Fitzmaurice

to be more concerned with truth than opinions

to be sincere and not pretend

to be free from hypocrisy: walk your talk

to know who you are and to be that person

to not fear others seeing your vulnerabilities

being confident to walk away from situations where you can't be yourself

being awake to your own feelings

being free from others' opinions of you

accepting and loving yourself.

In 2006, Orlando Patterson wrote an essay in the New York Times entitled, "Our Overrated Inner Self." Patterson wrote, "I couldn't care less whether my neighbors and co-workers are authentically sexist, racist or ageist. What matters is that they behave with civility and tolerance, obey the rules of social interaction and are sincere about it. The criteria of sincerity are unambiguous: Will they keep their promises? Will they honor the meanings and understandings we tacitly negotiate? Are their gestures of cordiality offered in conscious good faith?"

What Patterson is saying is that we have a "public face." We have civil roles to play. "And what it means for us today is that the best way of living in our diverse and contentiously free society is neither to obsess about the hidden depth of our prejudices nor to deny them, but to behave as if we had none."

Questions to consider

1. Reflecting on the Patterson quote, do you get along better in the world being true to your inner self with all its emotive power, or true to your sense of civility, or in making a sincere effort at knowing and getting along with others?
2. What does being authentic ("inner authenticity") and living authentically ("outer authenticity") mean to you?
3. What experiences, either intentional or unintentional, have developed your authenticity?
4. Does authenticity come naturally with age, or does it have to be consciously achieved?
5. How do you know if you are being authentic?
6. How authentic do you feel you are?
7. Can you describe a situation in which you found it difficult to be authentic?
8. Are there times when you found it unwise to be fully authentic?
9. Can you identify any ritual or technique that bolsters your authenticity?

Likes and Wishes

How did this session go for you? Is there anything you'd like to call particular attention to?

Closing Quotes and Extinguishing the Chalice

"Only the truth of who you are, if realized, will set you free."

~ Lockhart Tulle

"We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be." ~ Kurt Vonnegut

This above all:

To thine own self be true,

And it must follow, as the night the day,

Thou canst not then be false to any man.

~ Hamlet, Shakespeare

"Be yourself, everyone else is taken."

~ Oscar Wilde