

The Impact Of Authenticity On Your Mental, Emotional And Physical Health by Afshan Tafler

Do you ever feel like you're doing all the "right" things in life and on paper your life is pretty good, but inside you feel this nagging feeling of void or emptiness? Maybe you have a partner, kids, a great job and on the outside you "should" be happy, but inside you can't seem to muster up enough "positive thinking" to feel happy about your life?

Then you go around thinking "what's wrong with me?," "why am I so unhappy?" , "why do I stare at that person's life on Instagram and feel like my life isn't good enough?"

If you're in your 40's then many may call this a midlife crisis But I would call this more of an *AUTHENTICITY CRISIS*. And in the era we live in, this authenticity crisis is coming at younger ages and showing up as depression, anxiety, and emotional dysregulation.

What It Means To Be Authentic

Genuine, original, real, actual, true. These are all definitions of authentic. But what does it really mean to be an authentic person living an authentic life?

Stephen Joseph, the author of *Authentic*, who has conducted years of research on authenticity, says authentic people:

1. Know themselves
2. Are able to listen to their inner voice
3. Can understand the complexities of their feelings
4. Are able to face up to the truth about themselves, no matter how unpleasant they might find it

He goes on to say that, "in contrast, people who are alienated from themselves fail to go with their intuitions, they get confused about their emotions and make poor decisions for themselves, instead of doing what they think will please others."

How Authenticity Gets Derailed

The number one way authenticity gets derailed is when one does not trust their own inner knowing and instead relies upon others and the outside world to determine who they should be.

How does this happen?

It starts with conditioning in childhood. We often give up who we are to stay connected to our caregivers. As children, we learn very quickly to listen to our parents in order to stay safe, loved, accepted and connected. For a child this is survival. We will do anything to stay connected and loved even if it means giving up who we are in the process.

From the perspective of the authentic expression of emotions, as children, we may have learned that if we show our true emotion of anger or sadness, and our parents didn't approve of it or help us express it in a healthy way, then we learned to hide our emotions and shut them down.

From the perspective of tuning into our bodies and knowing what our body needs, a child may be given some food to eat but the child is not hungry yet. Perhaps her stomach is digesting slower that day or she's not as hungry. But the parent insists on her eating right then and forces her to eat, even getting angry at her for not eating. What does the child learn? "My body's messages are incorrect. Someone outside of me knows better than my own intuition of what my body needs right now."

Loss of authenticity can start in these small, subtle ways of being taught that our true expression is not welcomed or valid and, our intuition of our needs cannot be correct or respected because we are a child who doesn't know better.

Unfortunately, this can lead to a lifelong struggle of not knowing oneself in a deeper, intuitive and self-loving way.

How Authenticity Affects Your Mental, Emotional And Physical Health

Living authentically by knowing yourself, being able to understand, accept and express your emotions, follow your own intuition, and trust in your ability to make the right decisions for yourself and your life can have significant positive impacts on your health and well-being.

Research shows that people who live more authentically are prone to greater psychological well-being. Greater mental health generally equates to greater physical health too.

When one cannot live from this true place of authenticity, then stress is often created in our minds and bodies. This stress may be subconscious at first (since it likely started from a young age), but it eventually builds over time resulting in mental and physical imbalances that can show up as anxiety, depression, chronic anger, fatigue, stomach disturbances, and chronic illness.

Anything that takes us away from who we truly are and who we are meant to be in this world, has the potential of creating immense stress in our bodies as we are denying our true creative expression of our authentic self.

How Authenticity Affects Your Family's Connection

Living in a family where parents are not authentic to who they truly are can create a lot of stress in a family system.

How?

Parents who are not living through their authentic self, whether it is expressed as being a people pleaser or stuck in a job they hate, are often unhappy deep down as they are living a life they think they "should" be living instead of a life their inner guidance system wants them to live.

Children can read this. They are not stupid. They are quite intelligent beings who (especially when younger) read things on a more energetic level than on an intellectual level. They can read our bodies and facial expressions. They can see us “disconnecting” when we get home so as to “de-stress” ourselves from a day of denying our authenticity.

Parents who cannot live through their authentic selves tend to unknowingly dump their own conditioning onto their children and this shows up as having expectations of their children to live up to that same conditioned model of how one “should be,” versus allowing the child to be who they truly are.

The child can then become angry, resentful, and rebellious or compliant, but perhaps anxious or depressed.

Lack of authenticity in a family system leads to lack of life force for that family system and the individual.

Taking The Leap Into Authentic Living

To live authentically is to be fully in tune to your inner experience from intuitive inklings to body responses to emotions and to thoughts and creative ideas that come forth from these inner feelings and sensations. It is about getting to the core of your way of being and determining if this way of being is “life-draining” or “life-giving.”

The journey of becoming authentic is one that many of us have embarked upon, as most of us were not privy to an upbringing of no conditioning and being taught how to tune into our authentic being. Some of us have had to face a lot of inner struggle with mental or physical illness or traumatic life circumstances in order to come face to face with the core of our being and choose that path.

The irony of life is we are born into this existence as a “whole” and authentic being, only to be constrained by our human brain and nervous system that has become wired to be a certain way due to life circumstances where we had to choose to survive, stay connected, loved and accepted. This in turn formed a habit, a way of being that we felt we “had to be”... until now.

Now, in this moment, as you become more aware you are not living an authentic life, is when you are actually in a place of choice – to follow your core or follow the same path that has brought you much disconnection from yourself.

You get to choose.

How To Become Authentic In Mind And Body

Once you make that choice to follow authentic living, here are some ways to start to connect with your authentic self and embrace it in your whole being:

Start with becoming aware of how you’re truly feeling, be with those emotions, and practice communicating this to yourself and others. This will help your body to feel safe in the face of authenticity. Practicing mindfulness

through meditation can also help you become the watcher of your feelings and sensations in your body, helping you to become more in tune with your inner experience.

Notice how your body reacts when you say "yes" to doing something (for friends or family, work, or an activity). Does your body constrict and tighten (i.e. stress/life-draining mode) or does it feel relaxed, open and expansive (i.e. life-giving energy mode)? Our body often tells us the truth more often than our brain does, so it's important to listen to this wise source where most of our intuition comes from.

Take deep breaths, into your belly, often throughout the day. Believe it or not, the simplest tool at our disposal to connect us with the core of who we are is our breath. This is why many ancient traditions have relied upon breath work to connect with our authentic inner experience.

Become aware of your learned personality tendencies, or parts of you that jump into action of living a life for others. Parts of us like People Pleaser, Inner Critic, Caretaker, Taskmaster, Striving Achiever, Distractor, Worrier – we all have sub-personality parts such as these that have formed to help us stay safe, loved, accepted and connected, and these parts of us may resist moving into a more authentic way of being. Understanding our inner system helps us to move towards the authentic life we desire.

Regulate your nervous system. Many of us who have strong tendencies to be who others want us to do so because of traumatic experiences earlier in life. To feel safe to be your authentic self means to rewire your brain, body and nervous system to live more from a place of calm and ease vs. fight, flight and freeze.

Living an authentic life takes courage for many. But what is this life for if we cannot be our true selves and express to the world our true gifts? Follow your heart and follow your core and you may just find the life and fulfillment you have always wanted!

About Afshan

Afshan Tafler is a Whole Life Coach and Conscious Parenting Coach who helps you discover your power to transform your health, your life and your relationship with your children. Through a combination of Mind-Body Coaching and transformational, scientifically proven energy psychology techniques, her expertise is to help you reprogram your mind and body for optimal health and create more peace and joy in your life. You can connect with Afshan at www.illuminateu.ca.