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## **Be a Nobody? Are You Serious?**

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Credentials are a fact of life degrees (even honorary), certificates, diplomas, titles, qualifications and the like are symbolic badges. Credentials have their place in life. Credentials support us to feel confident (even when we aren't), and support others to feel confident in us. Credentials allow us to assume responsibility and accountability, and support others choices to allow us to lead, manage or supervise. Credentials communicate education and experience upon which others can rely.

Where credentials get in the way is when they lead to obsession and preoccupation. Meaning?

Simply, some folks become their credential. A new identity is birthed from their credential. They feel like a somebody as a function of their credential. They take their credential out of context and allow it to become bigger than life itself. These are the folks - at work, at home and at play - who can't get out of the way of, separate from, their credential. They wear it like a cloak. It's become their brand.

When folks are obsessed with their credential, when they are their credential," they're always on in formal meetings, in informal workplace gatherings, in water cooler conversations, with clients and other stakeholders, in outside-of-work social situations, even when shopping at the local retailer their conversations and their interactions are largely motivated by their need for recognition, acknowledgement and their need to feel emotionally secure, to be seen as somebody. And, for this somebody," its all about Do you know who I am? "Do you recognize 'my credential that is me'?" Often consciously, more often unconsciously.

There's an intellectual component of the need to be somebody being cognitively recognized as important, knowledgeable, educated, having position, power, status or privilege and there's an emotional component to the need to be somebody the physiological feeling of being "held" and seen. When either of these is lacking, an individual can experience a sense of being a nobody," - a fate equal to death unbeknownst to them, it's an ego death. They might feel they don't exist. Or they have no value or worth. They feel deficient. They have no identity. They're not somebody.

The psychopaths and narcissists who cross our paths in every walk of life are obsessed with the need and want to be seen as somebody. Their credential is the story line of their life, a statement about who I am, a somebody.

To these folks, the response to the question, What do you do? is an I am statement. A be-ing, not a do-ing. Why? Because they are their credential an announcement of who I am.

The credentialed often love the limelight, to be the center of attention and the life of the party. Being at the center (of the Universe!) feeds their ego, and nourishes, not their sense of pride ( a good thing), but hubris, pride bordering on obsession (not such a good thing). Often when one of these folks feels they are not heard or seen, they quickly react with a rough or unkind word, an inappropriate action or reaction that communicates: Do you know who I am!!!!?" Can't you see' me!!!!? What's wrong with you!!!!?

Such reactivity is the downside of identifying with one's credential. The point is when one of these folks feels unseen and unheard, their emotional and physiological response, underneath it all, is one of anger fueled by sadness, and loneliness. Like the young child who is wet, but not diapered, or hungry but not fed. Feeling

unseen, unacknowledged and ignored, these folks, now as adults, are really reaching out to be seen and acknowledged - "emotionally wet and hungry," wanting attention, not for diapers or food, rather, to be seen, heard and recognized as "somebody."

So, what would it be like to consciously choose to be a nobody," to explore and be curious about what we see about ourselves if we didn't need to be somebody? That is, to be a nobody and show up authentically without the shoring up, the crutch of the credential?

What would it feel like if we went through an hour, a day, a week, a month, a year, or a lifetime, without needing to be somebody? Just showing up as who I am, right here, right now, authentically?

Being authentic in our life means, simply, I am me. Not, I am my job or I am my credential. Just me. What might that be like, look like, feel like, sound like? What might others be saying about you?

Well, it might look like we own our mistakes. Or, we don't become too big for our britches. Or, blame others for errors. Or, come across as arrogant, holier-than-thou, and super(wo)man. We shed the cloak of fakeness, phoniness and pretending. We allow ourselves to say, I don't know. or "What do you think?" Or allow our embarrassment, our shyness...our vulnerability.

As a nobody, we become more interested in others. We let go of our ego. We are inclusive in thought, word and deed. We are open and accepting. We operate from I am one of you. and "We are in this together for our mutual good." We seek to understand before being understood. We stand back, inquire, observe and listen. We walk in others shoes. We let go of power, status, title, privilege and qualifications. We move away from center stage to stage right, maybe even move to being behind the scenes. We allow it to be OK to not need to be the expert. We become servant rather than master. We become flexible rather than rigid. We come from our heart in addition to our head. We become less important rather than self-important. In essence, we add a spiritual component to who I am and how I am. In a way, we become invisible. We get out of own way. We become quieter more self-reflective, more self-observant. In a word, humble.

Humility, being a nobody," means looking up at the vast, vast Universe and knowing. that I am not the center of it...regardless of my credentials.

**So, some questions for self-reflection are:**

- Do you rely on your credentials to be seen as "somebody?" Do credentials, yours or others', get in the way of your relationships?
- Are you ever jealous of others' credentials?
- Do you ever feel like a "nobody," or deficient, because you lack a certain credential?
- What would a next credential "get you?" Are you a "nobody" without it?
- Do you use your credential to behave like a "know-it-all" or an expert?
- Do you ever use your credentials to mask weakness, or deficiency?
- Do you keep your credentials in a proper perspective?
- Do credentials line your walls? If so, why?
- When folks ask, "What do you do?", how do you respond? With a "do-ing" or a "be-ing?"
- Would you feel like the same person without one of your credentials?
- What would it be like to practice being a "nobody" next week, in thought, word and deed?

- Do you always need to be "on"? If so, why?
- Are status and title important to you? If so, why?
- How do you practice humility?
- When do you feel like a "nobody" and a "somebody"?
- How often do you feel you show up authentically?
- How were credentials perceived in your family as you were growing up?

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