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**It's about wholeness, not perfection.**

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"The world offers itself to me in a thousand ways, and I ache with an awareness of how infrequently I am able to receive more than a small fraction of what is offered, of how often I reject what is because I feel it is not good enough." - Oriah Mountain Dreamer

So, how often during the day do you beat yourself up for not being "better" in some way? As you reflect on your life at work, at home, at play and in relationship, can you see instances where you want to be perfect, and you aren't? What's that like for you?

Success and failure

One way we measure success and greatness is by assessing our failures. That is, what have I learned about myself in the throes of failure? There is no perfection without fault - none. The self-reflection that follows failure is the catalyst that fosters improvement, growth and greatness.

Do you spend time on the way to/from work, while lying in bed at night, watching television or exercising lamenting the fact you'll never be perfect? Do you dislike, even hate, yourself as you list all the ways you'll never be perfect? Do you remember other(s) telling you you'll never be good enough? Do you feel like the diamond with a flaw? Do you constantly ask, "What have I done wrong?." feeling the victim?

Wholeness, not perfection.

The way to your truest, deepest and authentic self is via the road of darkness, the road that leads not to perfection, but to wholeness. In truth, there's no point when you can say, "This is perfection." Perfection, i.e., being a "10," is an ego-driven, mental idea. You think being a "10" means you have no flaws, no imperfections. Perfection excludes negative realities - an impossibility (no matter how hard your mind wants to convince you otherwise). You strive for perfection hoping to remove or mask your defects, your flaws. In essence, perfection means denying your self.

Wholeness, on the other hand, is an archetype - something unattainable - a metaphor intended to guide, inspire, support and affect your reality in various ways. You embrace and manifest archetypes by being self-aware, conscious, affecting your attitudes and your approach to life and living. The archetype of wholeness points to both the positive and the negative, all parts of your self.

At the outset, pursuing perfection can be a useful first step in our growth process as it motivates and provides a focus on the positive. However, it must give way to the pursuit of wholeness where our duality (the light and the shadow, the good and the bad, the positive and the negative) has meaning. Focusing on perfection is focusing solely on the personality, the outer, the "packaging." Focusing on wholeness puts our attention on the essential truth, beauty and goodness within our soul.

Wholeness does not know "wrong"

Wholeness is not a process of identifying what is "wrong" or imperfect and trying to fix or eradicate it, but to discover what your "flaws" have to teach you and learn from them. Your "flaws" exist as a means of challenging you to learn what you need to see about yourself. No flaws, no challenge. No challenge, no growth. When you learn what you are challenged to learn, the "flaws" often lose their charge, and in the process they often disappear.

So, who are you?

"We have the need to be accepted and to be loved by others, but we cannot accept and love ourselves. The more self-love we have, the less we will experience self-abuse. Self-abuse comes from self-rejection, and self-rejection comes from having an image of what it means to be perfect and never measuring up to that ideal. Our image of perfection is the reason we reject ourselves - the way we are - and why we don't accept others the way they are." - Don Miguel Ruiz

The reason striving for perfection is often a struggle - exhausting, exasperating, frustrating and overly emotional - is because you've lost connection with your core self and become mired in some self-image or concept of who you think you should be. The negative feelings and emotions that accompany striving for perfection are a signal to stop, take a deep breath and identify with your True Self - the peaceful, compassionate, tolerant, loving, and beautiful person you really are - the diamond. When you stop the relentless striving and beating yourself up, and take time for silence, meditation, and inner exploration, your essence will arise, your sense of wholeness manifests and the strength and courage to accept your self as you arises.

Fear drives you to the self-sabotaging, self-limiting quest for perfection. Love allows you to open to all that you are with curiosity, passion, excitement, and acceptance.

Wholeness then sees flaws and imperfections as eminently useful and necessary so you can embrace all parts of your self and value each and every experience.

Pain is a reality; suffering is optional

One ultimate fact of life is suffering and affliction, flaws, exist. Accepting this fact of life is the basis of your life's journey. Your desire to escape from your flaws, rather than embrace and learn from them, is what leads to suffering.

Most folks have a tendency to feel shame about, or deny, their flaws. In fact, your flaws are one of your greatest spiritual assets. When you consciously deal with your flaws they lead you along a spiritual path.

Unfortunately, at an early age you learned to push affliction away, to deny, hide from or otherwise deny your flaws and seek perfection. Rather than be open to suffering as a fact of life, you become defensive and live a life of avoidance. It's in the defensiveness that you first begin to reject yourself, experience shame and guilt and engage in self-destructive, repressive and

suppressive behaviors to avoid suffering.

When you seek wholeness, accepting your flaws, your diamond grows brighter and brighter, as your soul qualities of compassion, tolerance and understanding arise. When you are OK with your flaws and imperfections and allow your soul's love, power and confidence to arise, you not only avoid suffering but actualize your potential to support others to relieve their suffering.

During the coming week reflect each day on how often you express who you really are, your wholeness, and how often you only express some personality (perfection-seeking) trait.

So, our some questions for self-reflection are:

- Which do you seek perfection or wholeness? Examine closely and honestly your pursuit of perfection and the areas of life in which this pursuit takes place. What are the consequences of this pursuit on your souls quest for wholeness?
- What motivates you to move forward?
- In your relationships with some important people in your life, how can you share more authentically your true inner self?
- What do you judge as wrong or evil? Can you see wrong or evil from the perspective that it is serving some useful purpose? What can you learn from it?
- What are three defense mechanisms that you frequently use to deny your flaws? If you stopped using one of these, how does that affect you, your feelings and your relationships?
- What was perfection-seeking like when you were growing up? How did you learn about perfection?
- Can you envision a world where folks seek wholeness, not perfection?

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