



Warts Learning to love and accept yourself for who you are

AND ALL

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“OFTENTIMES THE FEAR OF FULLY SHOWING UP IN LIFE, UNLEASHING YOUR POWER AND ACTUALISING YOUR POTENTIAL, IS THAT THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MAINTAINING AND LIVING UP TO WHAT YOU HAVE CREATED SEEMS TOO BURDENSOME AND DAUNTING.”



THE JOURNEY TOWARDS MATURITY AND WHOLENESS begins when you open yourself to the voice inside. This inner call is at times subtle and almost imperceptible, and other times a loud demanding scream of frustration and resentment inside you that tells you your life needs to be different. This is the call of your spirit inviting or urging you to climb higher, dig deeper, grow bigger, and to ultimately wax wiser. It is the expression of the longing of your heart to live in peace and harmony with yourself and the world. It is the inner imperative to claim and take responsibility for your power, voice, legitimate entitlements, talents and your unique path in life that is an authentic expression of your passion and purpose.

Heeding the call requires honouring the intrinsic knowledge that you could achieve the experience of life for which you long. First, you need to be mindful of and willing to look at how you get in your own way, and in so doing, sabotage the full realisation of your true potential.

Strangely and paradoxically, the avoidance of growth arises out of deep inner fear. The paradox is that logically one would assume that growth would give you greater resilience and mastery over your world, and is therefore more desirable than staying stuck in the status quo. The fear, however, stems from messages that you internalised in your early life. This fear could be of either being not good enough or, oddly enough, of being too good. Often, people

are criticised and shamed as children for not being enough or being good enough. Children are also sometimes shamed for being too good, “too big for their boots”. The fear could be that if you outgrow or outshine those around you, you could be isolated or rejected. You could become too challenging for the people around you. You may have innocently highlighted their shortcomings and inadequacies simply by being wiser or more mature than them. Through this, you unwittingly demanded of them to be bigger or more sophisticated than they were able to be in order to support and guide you. Some children get a mixed message: you are not enough to satisfy my needs and at the same time your needs are too much for me to handle.

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In either event, the fear of personal growth is the unconscious avoidance born out of the early childhood experience of being shamed and criticised and feeling unlovable for being your true, uniquely brilliant, self. Being outstanding means literally being distinctive and set apart from the rest. The fear that results from this belief is the fear of becoming self-sufficient to the point of ending up alone, as in the expression “it’s lonely at the top”. It could also be that you, through force of circumstances, grew up too soon and did not have enough time to fully experience dependency. You now unconsciously fear that if you become totally autonomous, you will have to relinquish forever the deeply held artefact of desire from early childhood to be looked after and protected.

Oftentimes, the fear of fully showing up in life, unleashing your power and actualising your potential is that the responsibility of maintaining and living up to what you have created seems too burdensome and daunting. For a start, you have to live up to the raised expectations of others who expect you to consistently live up to the promise of your talents or exceptional qualities. There will be no place to hide either by shifting responsibility for your life choices onto others, or slacking off and letting go of the standards you set.

The call of your inner longing and inspiration often goes unheeded because it beckons you to challenge the status quo of your comfort zone. It threatens to disrupt the well-worn predictable life to which you have grown accustomed. The idea of growth seems overwhelming, despite the promise that what you will be moving towards will be a richer, happier and more fulfilling life. Most people choose to sacrifice their authentic expression of who they are, honouring their true goals and ideals, and to rather stick to safe, habitual well-worn paths prescribed for them by others.

The single biggest and most sneaky obstacle to growth is self-deception. This takes the form of self-justification, denying your power to make a difference or attributing blame and responsibility for your predicament to others or to factors outside of your conscious control. If you are like

most people, you are such an expert in this area that you do not even realise you are engaging in this form of self-hypnosis. You become so entranced by the stories of rationalisation that you constantly tell yourself that even in the face of multiple sources of consistent feedback from others or unwanted outcomes in your life, you persist in insisting that it’s not you who is causing the problem.

In order to get a firm foothold on the path to maturity and wisdom, you need to learn to unreservedly and wholeheartedly accept who you are, warts and all. This requires viewing yourself and your past mistakes and lapses in judgment through the lens of mercy and compassion. This means having compassion for your younger self, who would have acted differently, if that younger person had known what your current self now realises. This dispassionate and compassionate self-acceptance opens the path to becoming deeply honest about needs, feelings, motives and intentions, even when they’re destructive or distasteful, taking ownership and responsibility and having humility.

The mother of all addictions and problems with attention and concentration is the inability to tolerate – and therefore, process – discomfort. If you succeed in adopting this approach then you will find yourself more able to host unpleasant feelings and reactions. You will be able to tolerate the discomforts and face them squarely enough to process them. In so doing, you get to better understand your own deep hidden motives, unhealthy attitudes and faulty beliefs. Once you have allowed yourself to go through the humbling crucible of honest self-reflection, then you can become more adept at looking at, and – where appropriate – becoming more accountable through sharing your inner experience with candour and transparency.

True humility is having yourself in perspective. That means neither aggrandising yourself for your talents and abilities, which are endowments from Hashem, nor hating yourself for your shortcomings, through which you are afforded the poten-

tial gift of growth. Humility allows you to own your inner experience, true intentions, and responses. It also affords you the resilience and sense of identity and self-worth to be able to dispassionately accept criticism and feedback and use it to improve your self-awareness, consciousness of and sensitivity towards others.

The willingness and ability to be robustly self-aware and scrupulously honest in a compassionate, non-judgmental way, allows you to extend the same generosity of spirit and goodwill to others. The knowledge of your particular limitations and challenges or shortcomings helps you to identify with and feel part of the human condition, realising that you are neither better nor worse than others, but rather all in the same boat.

As the beginning of this article suggested, the knowledge that you are seeking about how to unlock your gifts and potential is to be found within. You encounter this knowledge when you start to become open to the exploration of wisdom and meaning encrypted into your own life history and ongoing, perpetually unfolding, experience. It’s in the aspects of your story and experience that you have neglected, avoided and left unexamined and unprocessed that your potential for wisdom and growth lie.

While the ultimate goal of growth might be clear to you, the path to reaching that point may seem complex or even opaque. It’s paralyzing to sense the end of the road and have no clear concept of what it means to get there.

The fundamental commandment by which we are obligated and challenged by the Torah to live is to walk in the ways of Hashem. You can only get onto the right path by firstly understanding what Hashem requires of you. Then you need to discern how your own self-referenced, subjective perspective, based on the unconscious forces described above, keep you asleep to your true self. The more profoundly you understand your Divine purpose, and combine that with self-awareness and knowledge, the further you will get in becoming the best version of yourself you are able to be. ■