

Be Yourself

Dean Henryson, MSW

© Copyright 1997

This book may not be reproduced in any form without the written consent of the author

Although many people have supported me, this book is dedicated to those who in being themselves have helped me become more of myself: Gary Stollman, Fred Lentz, Ed Smith, Shannon Wagoner, Judy and David Henryson.

INTRODUCTION

True power lies within yourself. This book can help you tap into that power if you allow yourself to be open. Often we get in the way of our own understanding. Sounds a little odd—doesn't it? Why would we get in the way of what might help us? This is part of what the following pages help answer.

The more you put yourself into the experience of the book, the more you get out of it. Doesn't that make sense? If you put someone else through it, how much do you think you will get? The other person learns while you do not. You are the one who needs to do the work on yourself to become and better that self, not other people. Get whatever you can out of this book, and it will be well worth your time and energy. The work is work for yourself, and the rewards in becoming more of yourself are grand.

Ideally, the book should be read at a maximum rate of one section a day. This helps you because it gives you time to digest what has been said, put it into practice, grow, and become ready to accept more information the next day at an appropriate time.

Questions and taping exercises are included in the book to aid absorbing, understanding, and integrating the material, making it more personal. These exercises promote growth through becoming more aware of yourself. You can still benefit from just reading the book, but the exercises build upon this. They help you interact with the text, placing you deeper into the learning process.

Your self is more valuable than anything else. Where is this treasure? You don't need to go across the world to all sorts of exotic places to find it. It's right here, reading

this with me. Congratulations on taking the journey to a greater self-existence. Not everyone wants to take this risk. You may find parts of yourself you don't like, but the benefits of these discoveries far outweigh any risks. Trust me and yourself on this.

Imagine going through your whole life not knowing who you are, not manifesting the person you are supposed to be. The truth is all of us fall short of who we are to some degree. On the average, are you yourself 5%, 50%, 80%, or 95% of the time? Wherever your percentage lies, you can benefit from its increase.

Enjoy the journey.

Exercises:

- **Taping.**

As you read each section, tape any special thoughts, beliefs, and feelings: both things you like and dislike, agree with and disagree with, relate to and do not relate to, have strong opinions about and have no opinions about. There are no right or wrong thoughts, beliefs, or feelings. Tape what comes to mind without judgment or editing. Try to relate everything to your life, not to other people's.

After reading each part of the book (there are three), do the exercise in Appendix A. Then do the exercise in Appendix B. Only look at the appendixes after you have read one of the three parts of the book.

- **Questions.**

Write your answers to questions at the end of each section. All questions are in outline form, so the ones underneath and to the right of a question are directly related to it. Some questions may sound repetitious, but allow yourself to

answer them as if they were new because you may have gained new insight since the last time you answered.

- **Journal**

It is also a good idea to keep a journal of happenings, feelings, and thoughts from each day. Especially note how you deal with your and others' feelings. Keep in mind that nothing you write can be wrong; and in fact, what first comes to mind is correct, regardless of how it may sound to or be judged by other people. Just write. This is not a test, this is growth.

PART I

BEING YOUR SELF

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.

—William Shakespeare (1600-1601)¹

¹ from *Hamlet, act I, scene iii*.

YOUR SELF

What is your self? What a strange question. We all know who we are—don't we? Who are you? What does it mean to be yourself? What is someone's self? Although we should know who we are, many people can only come up with vague ideas.

It is a good idea to know what your self is if you want to become more of it. Some people think you can never define the self. This appears to make some sense because your self always changes through growth in each moment. An ever-changing entity cannot be defined except the moment in which it exists, for even if we could define it in one moment, it would be different in the next. The definition is only elusive to us when we try to stop the self to determine what it is. When we maintain awareness of it in the continuous stream of moments it manifests itself in, we can embrace it and its definition.

Some people may claim they do not change. They say they feel like the same person they had been twenty years ago. However, we all are continually involved in the process of ourselves becoming. People may feel the same—themselves—even though their selves have been growing. The discrepancy comes from them having been there, feeling their selves, the whole time they have been growing. What they experience is their selves, selves which are in continual change; but the change is so small, moment to moment, that it does not feel like change at all. As we live each moment being ourselves, we gradually grow without notice of the change. If we could spontaneously become transported back into ourselves of twenty years past, then we would feel the contrast of change because the leap would be a twenty year span rather than just moment to moment.

So what makes you yourself? It has to be something unique because you are different from everyone else. Is it all the friends you have had, the different places you have lived, the education you have received, or the good and bad things you have done? Let's label all these simply as experiences. Is yourself, then, all the unique experiences you have throughout your life? What about the feelings and thoughts you have as you experience your life? Certainly experiences play a large part in who you are, but they are not part of yourself. Our experiences are something external to us. How we are affected by our experiences is through feelings and thoughts from experiences. Our feelings and thoughts are internal to us. Maybe they are closer to the essence of ourselves.

When you consider feelings and thoughts, you may question which of the two is more yourself. If we discover which one of these internal processes is more influential, maybe that one is also more of yourself. The one with greater influence would have to be one which occurs before the other in time. This follows the rules of cause and effect. One thing must occur before the other in time to be considered the cause of the other. Do you think first and then have a feeling? do you have a feeling and then thoughts spring from that feeling? or do both occur simultaneously?

Well, let's think about this issue for a moment. It requires some thought. By the way, why are we even concerned about it? What is motivating us to think about it? Were there some feelings that came first which motivated us to think, or did we just start thinking? Why did you even buy this book if you knew you would have to think? Were there some feelings you were having, motivating you? My guess is that you had some feelings that then motivated you to understand more of what being yourself is about. This whole book and all the growth necessary to write it were motivated by my feelings. I

wrote it straight from my heart, which means from my true feelings. My feelings came first, then thoughts, then this book.

Feelings come before thoughts. Think back to the last time you saw a new born infant. Does the thought that it is hungry come to its mind first, and then it feels hungry? Or does it feel hungry, and then it thinks about food? The infant feels first. It does not know what food is to be able to think about food. Thoughts of food—which kinds may be most pleasing, memories of different tastes—all develop later. The baby is just feeling hungry! If it has any thought, the thought would be *hurt* from being hungry. However, it does not even know the word *hurt*, so it could only sense the hurt as a feeling or develop its own thought symbol of what hurt is.

Let's consider the example of a baby that has reached a developmental level in which it can think about food. Let's presume it thought of milk first and then started to get hungry. Some adults may also have had this experience. Even though it appears differently, the baby and adults in these situations had been hungry to begin with. Because they were pushing hunger away, they were not feeling it. The thoughts of food only released the feeling that had already been existing, pent up behind a wall of suppression. This suppression may have existed as simply a busy activity. The adult may have been busily working and the baby may have been busily playing.

You are basically your feelings. This is why I can use the words *self* and *feelings* interchangeably throughout the book. Our thoughts are so close to ourselves that they may feel like a part of ourselves, but our feelings are more of ourselves. Thoughts are the closest expression we can have of our feelings, but our feelings are the expression of ourselves. If you feel only hunger, that is what your self needs at that moment, so that is

what you will be consumed with. You will use your thought process either to obtain food to satisfy the feeling or to suppress the feeling. The expression of your feelings is the window into yourself. This is why to be ourselves we cannot have only feelings; we must have feelings and at least one expression of them: thoughts.

-Try to define yourself in terms other than your feelings.

-Break down your self-definition into the simplest form possible.

-Can you do this without that definition somehow leading back to feelings?

-Have someone else test your definition to see if they cannot make it lead straight back to feelings.

Some Expressions and Suppressions of Ourselves

Language is merely a symbolic representation of thoughts, and like thoughts, it is either an expression or suppression of feelings. When you were a baby, you mainly expressed your feelings of hunger, hurt, and anger through body-language. As you developed, you acquired the symbolism of verbal language to help express how you felt: "Ouch!" "I'm mad," "Stop doing that," "I want this," "I'm hungry." You also used thoughts and language to suppress your feelings: "That doesn't hurt," "I'm happy," "I don't care what you do," "I don't want pudding," "I'm not hungry." The symbolism of language helped define you through expressing and repressing yourself, getting much

more complex as you grew older. Though even in its complexity, it is still simply an expression or suppression of your feelings.

When you are hurt, speaking truthfully with someone who listens may make you feel better because you are expressing some of your feelings merely through honestly talking. Conversely, you temporarily may feel better when you strengthen the suppression of your feelings through speaking lies to someone who accepts the lies.

Watch people closely as they talk. They continuously have some feeling of some level. Look at them without hearing their words and just try to see a moment in which no feeling is being either expressed or suppressed through the act of talking. You will never find such a moment unless you are suppressing feelings, blinding yourself to their feelings as well.

Some thoughts are so abstract that they are difficult for our selves to relate with. It is when teenagers in high school have difficulty relating math to their lives that they have difficulty studying it. Abstract thinking, such as in mathematics, can be an expression of a feeling; yet if people cannot relate their feelings in such an abstract way, it is difficult to have motivation to use the expression. Math can be related to more personally by adolescents through relating it to their feelings, as parents often learn. A parent might say, "If you don't study, you will not be able to go dancing tonight."

Our actions are also expressions or suppressions of ourselves. When we go to a movie, read a book, or go out with someone, we express or suppress a feeling, perhaps emptiness, loneliness, or desire. Consider the situation of someone having punched you, leaving you feeling hurt. The hurt partially expresses itself through your thoughts of why he punched you, of whether you should punch back, and of what other actions can best

express the rest of your hurt without getting into more hurt. You might continue to express yourself by the action of calling the police and reporting an aggravated assault. As you talk with the police, your hurt may further release itself through that expression, making you feel better.

Feelings and Motivation

People who are honest with their feelings have motivation to do what they want. They do not have a part of themselves they are denying, motivating them to do stuff they normally would not. Because they honestly face their feelings, they have the motivation their feelings offer to assert themselves and speak, giving them more opportunities of growth.

Your feelings are the force which brings passion and life into your life. Your sense of right and wrong, morality, opinions, and sense of self all come from having feelings. You learn that what is right is what makes you feel good and what is wrong is what does not. When you get hurt, you begin to have strong opinions about issues you normally would not have feelings about. Let's say you did not know what fire was and stuck your foot into it. You would quickly develop feelings, motivation, and opinions about this formally unknown entity. Your foot initially would feel pain from the heat. You then would gain motivation to move your foot out of the fire as an expression of the pain (perhaps accompanied by a grunt or two), gaining opinions of what fire is, of how close you want to get to it next time, and of whether you want your kids hanging around

it or not. Our feelings make it possible to gain knowledge and truth through motivating us to know about something. After we have felt the power fire has on us to distribute pain, we may explore the different possible uses of it, such as in war, ceremony, or healing.

Such motivation may also be observed when a group feels the burns of discrimination. The group develops opinions about itself and the groups which discriminated against it. If, however, people who are touched by fire do not listen to their pain, they may not have opinions with strong enough conviction and motivation to put out the fire. Denying the pain from discrimination fizzles motivation to stop the discrimination. Because the part of their selves is denied which could have grown through facing and integrating the pain, that part does not exist to fight against the discrimination.

Hurt and loss are extremely valuable assets to ourselves. They are the motivation for our growth. Without pain from the threat of our eventual death, we might just decide to sit on a couch and watch television for ten years. Without pain of hunger, we may not have the energy to peel ourselves off the couch to get food. Without pain of an empty life, we may not have the motivation to fill our lives with things that satisfy us and other people: work we enjoy, people we love, and things we like doing.

Positive feelings also motivate people (positive feelings generally can be defined as an absence of negative feelings). If you never experienced the joy of some activity, you may not have motivation to go through what is necessary to engage in that activity. Some people wonder why surfers get up so early on cold mornings and go into cold water. These people have experienced the enjoyment (lack of pain) surfing gives them, so they have the necessary motivation to repeat the activity, even in unusually unpleasant

circumstances. If they experienced no positive feelings from the activity, they would sit at home or be somewhere where they did gain positive feelings.

Feelings are not just motivational forces; they are yourself. The self has built into it motivation and energy to help it continue being itself. If the stream of your feelings were turned down, you would also have your motivation and energy turned down. Your life, self, and gifts to humanity would all be turned down as well. But if your feelings are allowed to exist—no matter what you are feeling, be it pain or joy—you have motivation and energy for growth.

-List some things you really enjoy doing.

-What feelings do you get from doing each activity?

-Would you continue engaging in the activity if you did not get these feelings?

-List some activities you don't like doing.

-What are some of the feelings that come from doing each activity?

-Do you find yourself having less motivation for the activity than for things you enjoy doing?

-If not, are you getting some positive gain, such as money, attention, security, sex, etcetera. Perhaps this sustains your motivation to continue the activity. If you think not, explain what gives you motivation to continue?

-Do you deny your negative feelings about the activity so that you can have motivation to continue in it?

-If so, do you notice yourself becoming more depressed, feeling bad about yourself, or thinking more negative thoughts?

-When have you been self-destructive?

-What do you think caused the motivation for this?

-What pain were you not admitting?

-What can you do differently to help prevent this self-destruction in the future?

-When has denying your feelings limited your growth?

-What can you do differently to help prevent this in the future?

WHEN YOU STOP BEING YOURSELF

When you deny a hurt, you limit the process of your self-existence. This fuels anger which has been kindled within you from being hurt. If you continue to hold in your feelings, the anger becomes directed at yourself for keeping your self from yourself. This self-anger leads to feelings of guilt or depression (the cycle of feelings was conceptualized by David Viscott)². The guilt is just anger directed at yourself and takes form as feeling bad or at fault. The depression is just the result of taking too much of yourself away, causing so much self to be gone that your energy drops.

² David Viscott describes the feeling process and each feeling in detail in his book *The Language of Feelings*, (New York: Pocket Books, 1976).

Simply the act of holding your feelings inside consumes energy. This works similar to how a dam behaves. The wall of a dam exerts just as much energy on the water as the water exerts on the wall, keeping static equilibrium maintained between the two. In regards to your emotions, when you deny a part of yourself, you use up energy maintaining force on the wall that holds your feelings inside.

Your body likes to be as efficient as possible with the limited energy it has. So when you use up energy through being depressed for years on end, your brain may adjust chemically to that energy drain, establishing a new chemical equilibrium which makes the depression more easily attainable with less expenditure of energy. In other words, your body adapts to the depressed state by making it an easier process to engage in. Over extended time, the depression will be seen by your body as an adaptive process that is desirable for you to achieve. Your body wants to be in equilibrium not in a constant chemical struggle to hold back electrical impulses in your brain of stored hurt. Your body will adapt by trying to maintain this state of depression as if it were a natural state. The result is chronic depression that may need to be treated with antidepressant drugs as well as psychotherapeutic means.

The act of a person's self taking away from itself causes him to trust his self less. If you were around someone who took away from you, hurt you, and did not care for your feelings, you would learn to distrust him; so it is the same with your self. If you do not take care of your feelings by accepting, acknowledging, and giving voice to them in some form of expression, you will come to trust yourself less. You will come to believe you are not the best person for yourself.

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

