

Work in Progress

Published monthly by Michele Crawford

Work in Progress is an electronic newsletter intended to assist individuals seeking optimum well-being.

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Work in Progress May 2008 Volume III Issue V

Feature Article: Two models of transcending adversity: Mindfulness and Assertiveness Part Five

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1) Note from Michele

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Dear Reader

There are many facets of being unassertive. The concept of unassertiveness is also known as being passive or submissive, martyrdom, people-pleasing, niceism, victim ideation, codependency and idealism: in other words, the door-mat metaphor. It conveys a lost and floundering spirit.

The roots of unassertiveness thinking begin when childhood developmental needs have not been met and continue into adulthood with irrational beliefs that are both personal and cultural.

The following two paragraphs open Chapter One of Don't Be Nice, Be Real by Kelly Bryson:

"Have you been a naughty or a nice little boy or girl? Well, then you must be enjoying the rewards of being a good little boy or girl. These rewards often include depression, intermittent explosiveness, career confusion or job meaninglessness, ambiguous anxiety, low awareness of one's own needs, either flat or explosive relationships, resentment about being the victim of "mean people," subtle self-hate and assorted psychosomatic illnesses."

"What a tragedy that our culture puts us in conflict with our human nature. It took me till the end of the school year in first grade before I could sit for the whole period with my hands folded, my feet together and my mouth shut. Then I was told "What a nice boy you were today!" That is when I was seduced into the slavery of people pleasing. I prostituted my own essence and prevented my little boyhood from expressing itself in order to get those few little drops of perverted praise."

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2) Feature Article: Two models of transcending adversity:  
Mindfulness and Assertiveness Part Five

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Besides inheriting a weak or non-existent identity boundary, unassertive people typically have enmeshed boundaries with other people.

Research and common sense tell us emotionally healthy people follow basic assertive rights in their relationships with other folks. Unassertive people do not understand these rights, which include but are not limited to: "You have the right to say no;" "You have the right to request that you be listened to with respect;" "You have the right to say it's not my concern when the issue is not important to you;" and "You have the right to change your mind."

Individuals with enmeshed boundaries do not understand these concepts, either for themselves or others. Without the conviction these rights apply to you, your boundaries will be entangled and your sense of self will not be defined. The core belief that supports this scenario is "My needs won't be met."

For example, you ask indirectly and manipulatively for what you want because you don't believe you deserve it at an innate level. And then, interestingly, you will not respect another's right to say no. "I hear you're going to Edmonton... I wish I could go to Edmonton but I have no way of getting there..." (Remember to put the precise whine in your tone of voice.)

Of course, the other person is supposed to interpret your real meaning and jump in to address your needs. If he or she doesn't, then your problem of not getting to Edmonton is his or her fault. Here follows door-slamming and name-calling.

However, this resentful reaction is probably not in his or her presence since "other people's needs are more important than yours." Besides, your anger must be eventually stuffed way down, deep down into your body.

Passive people are often hypersensitive to signs that you are not being noticed or your needs and wants are not attended to by others. Although passive people often feel angry, expressing overt anger feels alien. This anger covers an underlying deep sorrow, loneliness and at your core, you feel hopeless you will never be understood or cared for.

Another core belief of unassertiveness is that "It's always your way, never mine." Rather than speaking up for what you want, you just go along with everyone else's wishes or demands.

However, hidden resentments smolder over time and build into hostility and rage. The repression of anger is connected with many physical symptoms and diseases including some types of cancer.

Your core beliefs promote powerlessness, helplessness and being invisible. So accustomed to letting others' needs over-ride your own, you are no longer aware of your own needs, wants... self.

Shame and humiliation are also prominent emotions associated with unassertive thinking. The sense of being somehow flawed and unworthy is in tandem with an inner critic that rips at the core of your identity.

The implication is "You're not good enough." Vast insecurities are either flagrantly obvious or deeply hidden under a perfected appearance and bravado. Also, internal messages of self-degradation cause you and your relationships to suffer.

Solutions start in healing childhood wounds. Resolution also lies in identifying the irrational beliefs associated with being unassertive. Finally, outcomes improve when you learn the mature and confident beliefs of being assertive and have the courage to give them a voice.

Bryson, Kelly Don't Be Nice, Be Real (2004) Elite Books: Santa Rose CA.

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3) About Michele  
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Michele Crawford is a therapist who assists individuals who are struggling with trauma, anxiety or depression. Her passion for her work remains embedded in being able to connect with you in your suffering, helping you find real solutions no matter how complex the issue may be.

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4) Counselling Services  
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Are you prepared to live with more happiness, optimism, confidence, self-worth and hope? If your answer is "yes," then your next step is to contact me for a free 20-minute phone consultation. We can then discuss how I might best help you resolve your problems of Trauma, Depression and Anxiety.

The benefits of counselling with Michele include: significantly reduced stress levels, an optimistic outlook in life, increased confidence and hope.

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I want to reassure you that your e-mail address will never be shared or sold to anyone else.

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