

Becoming Who You Really Are

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My first reaction to the idea of writing, “Stop lying to yourself about who you really are!” was, “Well, I don’t think I do lie to myself.” Some mistakes maybe, a little exaggeration here and there, an excuse now and then, I guess., but I think I *do* know pretty well “who I am” – strengths, weaknesses, roles I occupy (work, family, memberships, etc.), moral values, habits.... Other people, I suppose, may sometimes see me differently. But I know “me” better than they do. Lie to myself...? Nah.

Looked at another way, though., from another angle., what I’m going to try here is just to be thought provoking. Try to read it that way. See if any of the following perspectives raise interesting questions for you as to how *you* might sometimes be absentmindedly kidding yourself about who you really are.

A life-long challenge for each of us is figuring out how the world works, and seeing how we might best navigate our way through life in such a way as to *make* it a good trip – good for yourself, and good for people you decide to care about. You start this at the time you’re born and continue until you die, coming up with the best answers you can to both of these questions. And your answers about yourself (at least the ones you actually *live*, don’t just *claim*), really *do* become “Who You Are.”

Who are you actually? It seems to me that a correct answer would have to include all of the lifetime experience you’ve had so far – thoughts, feelings, skills, beliefs, hope, values, style, social influence, and much more. (What would you add?) Call all of these your “Available Self” or the “Available You” – parts, aspects that you might call forth to be in the saddle at any particular moment in your life, depending on where you are and what’s going on at the time.

The actual You at any *moment* would likely be a fast changing thing, don't you think? Much depends on your self-perceived role, your self-perceived abilities, and whoever / whatever is involved in the present "situation" as you see it. And however other people respond to whatever you come up with also necessarily requires your shifting gears as to whatever aspect of your Available Self you had better call up right then.

Reading the Situation. Another angle on this can be that we sometimes don't even *see* the larger situation we may be sitting *in* or that we may be affecting, as we bring ourselves in and *choose* what to notice and how to respond to it. You and I meet, for instance, but I neglect to consider what you're ready for, whether this is a good time for you, anyone else I might have invited to our meeting and how they will feel about it. Or I don't even really consider who else will be affected by whatever you and I discuss and decide.

Even more immediately, I risk not noticing the moment to moment changing as to who You Are right *now* -- whether you understand, agree with, question, or are even interested in what I am saying. And you the same with me. We may both be lying to ourselves as to who is really present in our encounter.

If I were to think about such things -- moment to moment, at the time -- other parts of Me might step up very well, and I'd make better decisions. You can no doubt think of many such possibilities of unintentional neglect in your own life. It's more difficult to be "present" if you don't even realize what the real Here/Now *is*.

So the package of Available You's, and the changing You that's actually present from moment to moment at any particular time -- these are two very different pictures of "Who You Are". How well you're able to recognize and play (whatever the package of cards you've been able to accumulate so far), becomes pretty important.

The Potential Self. Another huge possibility of neglect (as to who you really are, or could be) is this: You can become so much a creature of familiar habit that you don't even think you *have* to think about how to approach a situation that enters your life. You just shift into a usual familiar gear and be whoever you "usually are" to deal with "that". But there is a new "You"

that might become possible if you could just loosen up enough to notice it. The question is, what *is* your *potential*? What *could* you *become*?

Even me: After 83 years, what could I still become? How might you and I be *stuck* now in our own “works most of the time” ideological practice? I think each of us, all our lives, has *potential* selves within – new understanding, possible skill, even transforming insight possibilities – that could transform standards of success and our accomplishments in nearly all aspects of our lives. The key is to have an open mind, *to seek and to wonder* at the right times when opportunity beckons. Even noticing *when* opportunity beckons.... But that doesn’t necessarily happen automatically; not at work, not in the family, not in retirement, not necessarily anywhere. It takes a shift in basic belief and in awareness. Otherwise you risk remaining **stuck in the lie**.

Larger System Applications. So far I’ve been talking about the lie that you or I can as individuals be “stuck” in. But take the notion up to other larger system levels and the same case applies. The Team, the Department, the Organization, the State, the Nation.... Changing from “Stuck” into a larger, better Self -Together presents another challenge.

It’s easier to change how you look at things if everyone around you is encouraging it. And harder if they aren’t. As an individual you can at least change what you see and what you try to do, and how you attempt to influence your relevant world, even if everything around you seems to want to cook on as it always has. In an organization, though, unless you can influence the system, and the different kinds of *power* operating within it, to cooperate together., organizational change can become difficult. The larger the Envelope you wish to change, the more difficult it can be, but the principles remain the same.

A more-available-possibility can be to start with influencing a subsystem. It may be possible to influence some segment of the larger entity – a particular relationship, a department, your own family inside the larger culture – even if the larger encompassing unit ignores or resists.

If you have or can enlist enough influence (even political power in backing), then education of others in a new way of looking at things as to, “Who We Are” or can *Become* -- does have a

good chance of actually becoming that way. Patience may be required for people to believe you really mean it., but it can happen.

A difficulty in larger institutions often is that competitive self-interest, distribution of power and influence, and sole focus on profitability can make it difficult to actually care about and respect the interests of all members. Each of us wants to get ahead, whatever that means. Neighbors can become means to an end. And that can result in very narrowly focused vision.

That brings us back to the beginning. Becoming who you really are is both a necessary and challenging individual undertaking. But on larger and larger system scales, it is also one that is necessarily social. That is, it's something that usually must be done with other people. A significant challenge then is: "How to become who you really want to be, and take a next step together that could be seen by anyone seriously affected as desirable – or at least not dangerous?"

If you were to wonder for a moment, what might you try toward becoming more who you really are – for yourself, and with a broader team around you?