

Why We Should Get Over Ourselves

Wise psychotherapists know that the first stage in therapy is helping clients to get out of their own way. Like everyone else, psychotherapy clients are motivated to see themselves in a certain light, not necessarily a good light, but certainly a familiar one. They tailor their anecdotes, memories, the way they talk and dress, the way they relate to others, so that they are of a piece. "Look" they say to the world "this is how I am". Most of us have a commitment to presenting ourselves as a coherent, consistent personality with certain tastes and attitudes. In childhood we concluded that our parents valued certain ways of being above others and we fell into a lifelong habit of presenting ourselves in the light of this perception. For example, when making a decision we can be more concerned with working out what someone like us would decide rather than what seems like the best decision. In straining to maintain this sense of self we make ourselves inauthentic and unreal. We become victims of our own publicity, placing between ourselves and the world a false self. This false self is a mask behind which we hide and a trap in which we suffer alone. If we do step outside of our habitual ways of being our friends and relatives often try to draw us back into our safe, familiar and unchallenging ways. "What's the matter with you?" They say, "You're not yourself today", and we have the same dialogue with ourselves inside our heads. It's as if we fear losing ourselves or disintegrating if we act authentically. Being yourself is hard. Others may not like the authentic you but once you've revealed it there is no going back. You have nothing else to give and nowhere else to hide. Most of us are so used to simulating false selves that identifying what is real and true can seem like an impossibility. Sometimes our bodies and illnesses manifest aspects of our true selves better than we are able to deliberately. Often as we get older and have less time to lose being ourselves gets easier.

What could you do today which you would really like to do, but normally wouldn't do, because it wouldn't be "like you"? Why not do it?

© ADAM MAY, MA (Hons), ADHP (NC), MNRHP, UKCP Reg, 2 Fron Heulog, Llanddaniel
Fab, Gaerwen, Sir Fôn, LL60 6EP.

Phone. 01248 421015. e mail: adam@adammay.co.uk

Responses to this article are warmly welcomed.