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Encouraging Self-Discovery and Empowerment



Veils

“I’m the glue. My role has been to hold everything together.” — Lynn

When do you put on a face or hide behind a facade?

In reality we all wear masks, or a social persona. Often, the mask covers the family secrets, what’s hidden behind closed doors. People-pleasers tend to use a smile as a way of covering up their own or others' anxiety or fear of rejection. Sometimes, as with Lisa, a forty year old mother and registered nurse, her veil developed in the form of perfectionism and external success:



“I became an overachiever, a perfectionist, to compensate for feeling worthless and for having no value because I was female. I learned to do everything the hard way, on my own.” Lisa

Lisa learned how to defend against her pain. Her fragile and defenseless part of the self was protected by her over-intellectualized sense of identity. Most of us, however, are unaware of how this veil or mask came to be.

As children, it is our natural instinct to look to our caregivers for protection, shelter, safety, nurturing, and guidance. These are *normal* dependency needs. However, if the parent is intolerant of the child’s normal needs and makes the child feel shame and humiliation for even having these normal needs, it creates a profound internal shattering of the child’s whole sense of security and safety. When the child’s own normal dependency needs never get met, there is a longing for them. An UNMET need.

The wounded child, who has been so totally dependent upon the parents, now desperately searches for self-protective ways to survive this emotional deprivation and gain a sense of fitting in and belonging in the family. In enmeshed family systems, roles get reversed and the child, acting as an extension of the parent, learns to mirror or meet the parents’ needs.

Often the child does this by concealing the *Real* or *True Self* behind a veil, taking on the role of “caretaker” or other false persona, one that he or she thinks *others* want him or her to be. This *False Self* is the one that is presented to the world, the one that becomes the new identity -- who one *is*. Too often the *Real Self* remains hidden behind veils, informing critical interpersonal relations in negative ways, a very high price to pay for getting lost in a destructive family process.

“I was put in this world to fix people.” — Beth

How do we rectify this gap in the core? The question is: What does it mean to lift up the veil that covers the face we show the world? What lies beneath that veil, our persona? Who *are* you beneath the veil?

It takes courage and faith to look in the mirror, lift up one's veiled *False Self* and stop undermining the strengths inherent in our *True Self*. We can learn healthy BOUNDARIES and hopefully set it right. It is good to see the patterns from our childhood so we do not repeat "family mistakes." Unfortunately, dysfunctional family patterns trickle down over multiple generations and family members have relationship problems generation after generation.

At the core, awareness of the learned patterns is a good starting point. You can develop the essential skills for getting out of the "soup." Identify the need to have your own mind, your own feelings, and emotional center. Learn the tools for emotional sobriety to find your way to the "gold" within, Discover the *True Self*, *who you are*, hidden behind the veil of the *False Self*.

"Every one of us is shadowed by an illusory person: a false self. This is the man that I want to be but who cannot exist." Thomas Merton, *No Man Is an Island*.

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