

Is That Really You?

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When you're giving a gift to someone you care about, you usually put some time, effort, energy - and money - into the wrapping (or get someone else to do it for you!) With anticipation half the pleasure, it's rewarding to create excitement and enthusiasm for the gift before it's revealed.

And so it is with our own image. It's not only a legal requirement that we clothe ourselves in most places; it's also a means of communication for us! By what we wear, we actually let people know all sorts of non-verbal messages whether we like it or not. Our visual image is one of the tools at our disposal, and some of us are very good at making the most of it.

Sometimes too much of it.

What if you were given a gift, wrapped with clever ribbons and bows and an aura of glamour and promise - and you opened it up to find a mouldy, rotting potato?

Do you ever fear people may see you like this? Are you even a tiny bit afraid that while you're pretty hot on your outer presentation, that your inner reality doesn't really match?

I'm amazed by how many leaders I meet - together, balanced, successful people - who confide that they don't know who they really are, or that they are not really good enough. They lack the self-knowledge, self acceptance and therefore the self-confidence they need to forge ahead with their lives.

We have been conditioned since we were very small to be so many things to so many different people so that we can gain acceptance and approval - sometimes we're not sure if we really are all or any of those things, deep inside. We are. We're all of them, and more. We're all the beliefs we hold, attitudes we take, values and opinions we espouse. We are all the good things we admire about others, even if it is only in a small measure of potential. And we also have the potential to behave as badly as we sometimes see them doing. We cannot recognise a quality or behaviour in others unless it exists within ourselves.

But here's a riddle. There is one thing we are, that everyone else is too, which makes us completely different to everyone else!

We are unique. One-off. I am, you are, so is he, and she. All different and all meant to be so. In fact it's one of the essential requirements of leadership - to be willing to be different, to stand out from the crowd.

That can be tough.

Intellectually, we know and accept it. But emotionally and behaviourally we often struggle with it. In our culture we tend to rubbish people who are different! It's easier to be the same as, to fit in. It's safer to be regular, average, normal.

I don't know about you, but I truly spent a large part of my life feeling and thinking like that. Trying to be ordinary, not to shine too brightly, not to threaten and alienate friends and family - classic fear of success stuff. Does any of this sound familiar to you? Even if you don't feel this way, do your kids?

Do you hamper your own brilliance through your reluctance to accept and develop your uniqueness? Please don't - we need you!

Nelson Mandela's reference from Marianne Williamson in his Inaugural Address has been widely quoted. "We ask ourselves who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous?" He asked. "Actually who are you not to be?"

No other being in the entire universe, in the past, now, or in the years to come, can make the contribution you can to your family, to your business, to this country and to the world. You are amazing, individual, one-off. You are a designer item. On all counts resist the temptation to become "mass-produced". Rare items are priceless. And in order to be irreplaceable, you have to be different.

Catherine Palin-Brinkworth is an extraordinary leadership speaker and change strategist. She can show you how to build your business, build your people, build your profits and build the life you want. Call her on 0419 221 916 or visit www.catherinepalinbrinkworth.com to sign up for her subscriber-only ezines - Enlighten and Power Points. While you're there, click Contact, and type 'free e-book' in the message section to receive 'Aligning Purpose Power and Possibilities' which tells you how to use what you've already got to reach your goals.