

A few days ago I listened to a podcast created by *Sounds True* on self acceptance, and as part of a summit on this topic, where the multiple aspects of self-acceptance are discussed and viewed through different lens or experience. In the first podcast the author Elizabeth Gilbert, at some point while discussing the need to speak our truth and live authentically, more or less referred to the fact that there is no privacy and that our lives are constantly scrutinized by friends, family, colleagues, neighbours and other people in our environment. I found that I could relate to this and admit that although I too have observed this for quite some time I chose at some level to deny it or at least was not able to connect the dots across experiences and contexts. I will provide just a few examples, especially from the last ten years or so of how I unwillingly facilitated this process and allowed it to increase and get uglier and more dangerous and generate more and more tangible losses. And as I write these lines I cannot avoid thinking that ironically it was this same crescendo of harassment and robbing and the accumulation of far too many experiences that ultimately ignited the fire within me to break free.

In 2011 I was doing a Masters' programme in Clinical Psychology as I have mentioned elsewhere. During the Easter Holidays we were required to complete our final CBT exam. Meanwhile, my husband was working throughout the holidays and a friend and his son were staying with us, so I was busy with less alone time than I needed. Feeling pressed for time and energy I considered getting better organized. I therefore, decided to gather all the sources, articles and books, I needed or was required to use to support my answers and lay them out somewhere so that I could have easy access and not forget anything, and also to be able to carry on where I had left off each time. One option was to put all this material on the floor of our study and the other was to move the table I use to do artwork next to the desk I was working at, which I actually did. The friend staying with us teased me about being a nerd since I missed out on several outings or restaurant meals and woke up way too early, but it all more or less worked out fine in the end because I was able to produce a good paper, hand it in on time and get an A. Amazingly, at some later lecture I heard about this experience of how I had been stressed out and had tackled the exam even though I had not yet talked about it. Later that same year when I showed up for the first contact or interview for my Internship, the woman who talked to me indirectly referred to images from *Let me be* and also details about my husband's and my own earlier businesses on the island, which gave me a creepy feeling, but as usual I brushed it aside. Later that same year, while participating in a workshop a woman asked me about how I felt when strangers talked to me about my life or seemed to know personal details and what I made of it. Again I had felt unease in my body, had discussed it with my husband, but had failed to stay with the input from my right brain and body and process the information deeper.

I have had too many to count similar experiences across time, but I was usually too busy or distracted to think certain things out extensively. I could perhaps briefly also refer to the boat or plane encounters and the eerie feeling of strangers 'knowing' what I had eaten, watched or done the previous evening or the content of a phone call conversation, not to mention the more frequent supermarket aisle experiences where like everyone else I have often found myself pondering on what brand or flavour to buy or whether to try something new and then total

strangers have shoved a familiar product in my face reminding me that that is the brand I usually buy! In her books Judith Orloff mentions great tips on how to navigate this type of experiences and how to deal with toxic encounters. In any case, during a meeting, with the dean and the head teacher of the programme and while my lawyer and husband were present, I was told that in Ancient Greece punishment was used as a means of education and character building, *even when someone was innocent* - Socrates crossed my mind and a few others in other eras and places, and also that I had not joined the marines or signed up for a Boot Camp training experience in my late forties. I also found out that day that 'I was not even considering working as a counselor, but thinking of writing a book' (God forbid!), something I had never, by the way, discussed with the particular professor....

Themes of privacy and intrusion as well as unfair punishment as a means of silencing or restricting are all becoming highly relevant this fall and I may write more in future posts, but I am once more through this post speaking my truth or breaking the silence a little deeper in order to assert that at times breaking the silence and speaking our truth or being authentic about our values and opinions is also a means to survive, to protect our privacy and dignity, set boundaries, stop intrusions, prevent losses and further persecution and if possible create a small shift on the bigger canvas. The more silent we remain the busier people may get around us and the more self righteousness or entitlement may raise its ugly head. As I have found out people tend to diminish you once you have adequately become invisible and silent and also that silence or decreased risk taking does not guarantee safety or peace. Also, the more rubbish you put up with the more nasty stuff and toxic encounters may come your way because you will be attracting what you fear, loathe and detest. One of the professors in the above context used to tell a story of a friend of hers who had 'an asshole magnet', one way of referring to the law of attraction, I suppose. And when one stops to really explore and process assaults or discrimination one may discover that some experiences have a *highly repetitive quality* and that for instance, the same form of unjust punishment techniques or lessons may have occurred initially at home, in second grade, in third grade during Greek school in a religious context, later on in high school and lyceum in another country, at university first time round and finally in a masters' degree programme decades later, and as with all traumatic experiences once we see and heal the early ones, accept and feel the initial pain and liberate our *exiled inner child* (term used by Richard Schwartz / Internal Family Systems Therapy / see below) from the basement, prison or tower it has been locked up in like Rapunzel in the GrimmBrothers' fairy tale, we can increase our clarity not only in terms of societal practices or games, but also become fully aware of our own defenses and coping strategies, unhelpful repetitive cognitive or behavioural patterns and ways of being, and ultimately or hopefully liberate the future from similar dynamics.

Also, sharing....

Extract from an article on Internal Family Systems Therapy and self-sabotaging defenses

‘So, to start, have you ever considered that the word *integrity* intimately relates to the kindred *integration*? Because if the different parts of yourself—each harboring a voice and agenda of its own—aren’t well-integrated, it may be impossible (across a large variety of situations) to keep your integrity intact.

To best understand how your integrity relates to your level of integration, consider how dictionary.com portrays the word: (a) “Adherence to moral and ethical principles . . .” and (b) “The state of being whole, entire, or undiminished.” Note how this second definition, contrasting with yet complementing the first, implies that to be virtuous, honest, and have moral rectitude, you need to be “whole,” which is to say, *unified*—or, to employ my preferred term, *integrated*’

Read whole article ‘How and Why You Compromise Your Integrity’ by Leon Seltzer Ph.D, posted Jul 19, 2017 at:
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/evolution-the-self/201707/how-and-why-you-compromise-your-integrity>