

Finding Ourselves

“Butterflies can’t see their wings. They can’t see how truly beautiful they are, but everyone else can. People are like that as well [when it comes to our own individuality].”¹

Because our beauty is often hidden internally and externally, we are frequently unsure of how to express ourselves. Should I present myself to the real world and risk rejection? Or should I alter my true characteristics in order to please others instead of myself? Our true self is often hidden by a mask in order to cover up shame, pain, and happiness. By hiding our true selves we are unable to truly express or feel. But why?

What should dominate in humanity -- our true selves or our false selves? In my own opinion I believe that there should be a compromise in the amount of our true and false self that is displayed on an everyday level. I want to be able to express myself fully but there is always the concern to fit in. I want to be an individual, but I don't want to be extremely out of the box. The resolution is creating the combination between reality and fantasy within our lives. Our mind and society often limits our ability to express our true selves. This often generates fear, a lack of expression, and anxiety within the boundaries in everyday life.

Humans wear disguises in order to manage the combination of love and loneliness in life. Often these characteristics begin to lose their meanings and are not truly understood “until you get comfortable with being alone, you’ll never know if you’re choosing someone out of love or loneliness.”² Often people cannot tell the difference between loving and liking someone because they feel affection towards people to simply eliminate solitude. The mask of compassion is often worn to disguise how we truly feel towards a person. Love can be used as a place holder to hide how individuals truly feel and are just afraid to express themselves. Exposing how we truly feel towards someone is not always comfortable to reveal. Additionally, the sensation of deep affection is not always easy to admit to ourselves. However, the feeling of love can be used to cover up the sorrow that we endure.

Often, shame and loneliness are hidden by a facade due to humans not wanting to have negative thoughts. We all have things in life that we regret and wish never occurred. By forgiving our past and ourselves, we are able to overcome the feelings of shame and move forward. However when someone is lonely enough, they will lie and compromise who they are in order to please others. The concept of having someone close to our hearts can be aching. But the moment we change who we are to fit other’s standards so we don't have to ever be alone is when we are undermining ourselves. By creating false smiles, we are trying to hide from ourselves and the world that our hearts are breaking.

The overall confusion begins with the simple theories revolving around who we “should” be, who we “want” to be, and who we “really” are. When a guiding force is not present within the realms of our lives we are presented with the confines between what is reality and what is ideal. By hiding our true selves we lack the ability to know who we are. The moment we begin following the path toward personal inspiration is when we are one step closer to understanding ourselves.

¹ Web. 22 Apr. 2015. <<http://data2.whicdn.com/images/21959680/large.jpg>>.

² "Top Reasons We Hide Our True Selves - Boycott the BS." Web. 15 Apr. 2015. <<http://www.boycotthebs.com/top-reasons-hide-true-selves/>>.

The human mindset creates a disguise in order to hide the feeling of disapproval and not being good enough based on societal standards. Our culture creates ideals for both men and women that we all strive to reach. This results in people not growing the way that is right and what is healthy for them. Self imposed terror interrupts people in the process of growing and being able to express their true selves. Often we feel like it is easier to surrender when life is overwhelming. Instead of dealing with fear we allow it to make the important decisions for our life and what our faith should be. Dread tries to control our lives by convincing us that our imperfections determine our values within our existence. However, the answer to dealing with fear is to be able to grasp self-love while defeating the sense of antipathy.

Most people have all experienced the feeling of devastation. Because of our own personal memories that affect our present, the action of “opening up the door to your heart can be extremely difficult if you’ve been hurt before.”³ The way to protect our fragile heart is by hiding certain aspects of our character from the public. This results in individuals becoming excessively closed off as a result of fashioning strong structures hiding their inner warmth. We begin to not truly experience our lives as we should.

By wearing a mask upon our faces, it forces the feeling of solitude. We fear being rejected by our peers and are convinced that “you are only ever loved to the extent that you are known.”⁴ We strive to make a mark in this universe. However, we become shallow when we try to conceal ourselves and the potential relationships we withhold in order to fit in. There is a neverending race we participate in to live up to what people anticipate from us. This results in our true selves being left at the starting line. People attempt to adventure away from being shallow, but we usually return back to the feelings of being unknown, unloved, and unchangeable. By being able to overcome and understand the dreary feelings in life, we are able to reach happiness.

We create different facades in order to cover up how we truly feel. These disguises hide “fake happiness [and] cover up your real feelings.”⁵ The mask of pain is worn when our life feels like it is crashing, similar to the pressure heavy waves create for the small creatures living in tidal pools. It is difficult to escape from the fear of failure, but it is a challenge that we need to overcome. Removing our false self compels us to admit to ourselves and the world around us that we are not as fine as we appear.

The concept of hiding our self due to the feeling of shame is a part of our humanity we prefer to keep concealed. This false version we wear “screams self confidence or pride in material possessions” is a factor we are lacking in our self-confidence.⁶ This facade brings out the notion of being worthless. We use our new faces in order to help people notice aspects of ourselves that we are convinced gives us worth. The disguises are effective in distracting others from noticing our flaws. When humans wear the mask of shame they are absorbed into a lie that covers up humanity and true selves from the world around us.

The moment we loose the ability of expressing and producing our real thoughts, ideas, and feelings is the moment when we are captured in the domain of the emotional and behavioral

³ "Top Reasons We Hide Our True Selves - Boycott the BS." Web. 15 Apr. 2015.

<<http://www.boycottthebs.com/top-reasons-hide-true-selves/>>.

⁴ “you are only ever loved to the extent that you are known” (powertochange.com/discover/faith/unmask/)

⁵ "Chronic Anxiety Disorder: The Price You Pay for Hiding Your True Self." Driving Peace RSS. Web. 15 Apr. 2015. <<http://www.drivingpeace.com/chronic-anxiety-disorder/#.VS4HuEtH3II>>.

⁶ Power to Change. (n.d.). Retrieved April 15, 2015, from <http://powertochange.com/>

facade. The concern with pretending to be something or someone you are not is that it gives anxiety more power to control the course of your life. Trying to keep up with a false self is exhausting and hard to maintain. However, when the emotional mask begins to be a regular habit is when we lose our identity and our own way of thinking.

Humans often struggle with always trying to make others happy. This facade is worn out of fear and being emotionally assaulted. The people pleaser mask is worn in order “to make other people happy so they’ll accept you and be less likely to emotionally attack you.”⁷ This forces us to forget about how we feel and we begin to be concerned with making others happy before ourselves. When our thoughts are different than our peers’, they are sometimes forgotten about. This act results in the feeling of dread because it forces our anger to be present in our emotional makeup. What are my own thoughts and motives? Do they even still exist? The most powerful mask humans wear is anger due to it being more influential than being hurt, fearful, or even sorrowful. Anger is usually utilized in order to not feel, to not endure empathy and to protect us from feeling vulnerable. When sensitive people are consumed by rage, it can result in them feeling alone and their self-respect begins to suffer.

Another disguise humans wear is the “happy camouflage,” which is used to convince everyone that you are always cheerful. This pretense, “Fake happiness covers up your real feelings” and instead shows the world a numb version of yourself.⁸ This facade forces humans to put on a fake smile while they are hurting inside. The false self makes it impossible for anyone to identify when you are in pain, even when people are cruel and heartless towards you, because of the fake face you put on for the world to see. The happy cover-up results in humans hurting on the inside and nobody has any clue how they are actually feeling. Facades are used to hide how you truly feel but often result in making individuals feel even more alone.

Facades portray a false personality layer of a human that we wear in order to hide our true character. There comes the point in life when “we all wear masks, and the time come when we cannot remove them without removing some of our own skin.”⁹ This is the moment when our false self is stronger than our real self. The role of a mask is to display edited, decorated versions of ourselves for the world around us to enjoy. It is able to create a false version of us “to divert people from their darker intentions.”¹⁰ It is able to protect the aspects of ourselves that we don’t want exposed and instead only reveals the characteristics of which we are proud.

Masks are capable of acting like a protective barrier in order to manage our own insecurities. We are not able to get rid of socialization and instead we have to understand our own rules within some type of guidelines. Always coping with, controlling, or confining to the ideals of our society that can be exhausting to please. Even when all of “Life’s a masquerade. Everywhere you look are people behind masks”¹¹ while emotions, flaws, and vulnerability are located within the limits of humanity each person obtains a different quantity of those feelings. Some people are better at hiding those feelings behind a facade. This results in the incapability to convey our-

⁷ Wearing Masks. (n.d.). Retrieved May 3, 2015, from <http://blogs.psychcentral.com/emotionally-sensitive/2012/01/wearing-masks/>

⁸ Chronic Anxiety Disorder: The Price You Pay for Hiding Your True Self. (n.d.). Retrieved April 15, 2015, from <http://www.drivingpeace.com/chronic-anxiety-disorder/#.VS4HuEtH3II>

⁹ Web. 22 Apr. 2015. <<http://data2.whicdn.com/images/21959680/large.jpg>>.

¹⁰ "What Masks Do You Wear and Why?" Be Your Whole Self. 11 May 2012. Web. 20 Apr. 2015. <<http://beyourwholeself.com/what-masks-do-you-wear-and-why/>>.

¹¹ "Recent Posts." The Mistaken Wallflower. Web. 22 Apr. 2015.

selves and how we feel. However, the disguises we wear and our true selves are capable of reaching a state of being bewildered.

The biggest fear in life is opening your mind to the concept of compassion. The feelings of loneliness, helplessness, and insignificance are often the major sensations that one will fear on an everyday basis. Our reality and identity is shown through our ability to feel sympathy. Our society has presented the concept that if we are not happy, confident, and successful then we are a victim of an emotional disorder.

Our society is convinced that it is not normal to experience bad feelings and that we need to find a solution. The resolution is to have a doctor prescribe a drug in order to help out with the emotional disorder. By becoming dependent on medication, we rely on its strength to suppress the dark ways our mind can reach. Our culture is convinced that if we do not resolve our unpleasant behaviors then there will be a severe outcome. It is almost as if our bad feelings similar to the symbol of a monster because they both are able to capture us at a weak moment and drag us into despair. Over time, humans acquire a “happy face” that portrays the message that “it doesn’t hurt.”¹² Truthfully the feelings do hurt and we just do not know how to control them. It doesn’t help when adolescents are convinced that the “cool kids” never have depressed sensations.¹³ This often results in teenagers settling on medicating or numbing their feelings with drugs in order to “fit in” to our societal standards.¹⁴ However, it is normal for humanity to encounter loss, frustration, and disappointment even if we don't enjoy it. The biggest struggles for teenagers is “giving yourself permission to feel, without shame or guilt, and identify what messages the painful feelings have come to give you.”¹⁵ We want to feel only joy, but we cannot neglect the sense of heartbreak which often follows close behind. By being human, we are required to feel both pleasure and sorrow.

Humans often create a false self to protect themselves from discovering admiration within their true self. However, our disguise often dominates and begins to cover up all our unique qualities that make us different from others. This generates “a terrible poverty of inner self that arises from the ascendancy of the false self, a loss of our innate vitality, joy, and creativity.”¹⁶ Humans need to find the right amount of their false self that they can endure without losing their special self. Our components concealed by the mask are often our characteristics that highlight our deep compassion, creativity, and the meaning our existence.

The moment we become too reliant on our false self is when we loose the ability to recognize and share our unique gifts with the world around us. When we begin to “rely more and more upon our false self, and become more and more comfortable with our true self” is when we

¹² "Our Greatest Fear - Giving Yourself Permission to Feel ..." Web. 20 Apr. 2015.
<http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/741741/jewish/Our-Greatest-Fear.htm>.

¹³ "Our Greatest Fear - Giving Yourself Permission to Feel ..." Web. 20 Apr. 2015.
<http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/741741/jewish/Our-Greatest-Fear.htm>.

¹⁴ "Our Greatest Fear - Giving Yourself Permission to Feel ..." Web. 20 Apr. 2015.
<http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/741741/jewish/Our-Greatest-Fear.htm>.

¹⁵ “giving yourself permission to feel, without shame or guilt, and identify what messages the painful feelings have come to give you”

¹⁶ "The Power of the Gifts We Hide | Psychology Today." Web. 15 Apr. 2015.
<<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/finding-love/201312/the-power-the-gifts-we-hide>>.

begin to lose our individuality.¹⁷ Our gifts clench our greatest desires, our risky ideas, our vulnerable features, and our passionate necessities. However, it is not always easy to communicate our brilliance to the world. The moment we are able to control our lives is when we are no longer vulnerable to our false self.

We lose the ability to create, love, and play when our false self takes control over our humanity. The “*deepest* form of despair is to choose to be ‘another than [one] self’”¹⁸ We are no longer ourselves when our false self is in control. This is because we are not doing things for personal happiness, but instead to please others. As long as our false self exists, it will limit or force us to become distant from what makes up our humanity. Being able to identify our true and false selves will enable us to determine a true perspective on our thoughts and placement in the world.

The internal conflict of competition between our true and false self begins during the early stages of the human development. Donald Winnicott, a pediatrician and psychiatrist, produced the concept that there are “two possible lines of development” for our humanity.¹⁹ We can either express our true self to the fullest or our false self. Our true self is based upon spontaneous experiences and being able to simply live our lives. It allows us to center our life around encountering reality within each day. While our false self can authorize us to endure a sense of absence of unplanned events and create a lonely atmosphere. Why wear a mask to show our false self?

Winnicott uses the term false self to capture and understand the human “defensive structure” constructed at a young age.²⁰ Children often create a false self in order to meet all of their “mothers needs” and expectations before than own necessities.²¹ Based on Winnicott’s opinion, our false self represents a version of ourselves on an exaggerated level. At a young age children begin to establish a false set of relationships with others, which carries onto adolescent years. By the adolescent years, we begin to be associated with our internal and external versions of our true self. Teenagers begin to be labeled by how they appear and act. This forces schools to create a dress code in order to create conformity and safety for students. Uniforms also generate expectations they have for each person who attends the institution. Wearing a uniform in public creates a sign over their head “I’m rich and a snob.”²² What if I don't want to communicate that message to the world because that idea is not truly associated with the accurate version of myself? Being forced to wear a uniform does not nourish our creativity and individuality as a student.

Adolescents cannot look very physically different on the outside if we are required to wear the same outfit five out of seven days a week. This forces teenagers to reach a moment in

¹⁷ "The Power of the Gifts We Hide | Psychology Today." Web. 15 Apr. 2015.

<<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/finding-love/201312/the-power-the-gifts-we-hide>>.

¹⁸ "Response: The Kierkegaardian Self and Person-centred Therapy." Response: The Kierkegaardian Self and Person-centred Therapy. Web. 23 Apr. 2015.

¹⁹ "True Self and False Self - Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia." Web. 20 Apr. 2015.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/True_self_and_false_self>.

²⁰ "The Power of the Gifts We Hide | Psychology Today." Web. 15 Apr. 2015.

<<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/finding-love/201312/the-power-the-gifts-we-hide>>.

²¹ "The Power of the Gifts We Hide | Psychology Today." Web. 15 Apr. 2015.

<<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/finding-love/201312/the-power-the-gifts-we-hide>>.

²² "The Unspoken Messages of Dress Codes: Uncovering Bias and Power." ADL Lesson Plans. Web. 20 Apr. 2015. <<http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/curriculum-resources/c/the-unspoken-language-of-bias-and-power.html>>.

their lives when they strive “to set themselves apart from the crowd through their clothing,” because changing our appearance is often an easier process than altering the way our mind works.²³ Students begin to push the uniform limits in order to capture as much of their true selves that they can grasp. However, the effort to understand the realms of our true self is often demolished by the administrations. The excuse for their actions is that these elements (“unnatural colors, body piercings, tattoos, etc”) are distractions for the student body.²⁴ But truthfully it is just an excuse for schools to make us all look the same on the outside. Each school has different standards for each student in the community. For example, my school requires all the girls to wear a grey pleated skirt, with a burgundy sweater (which is supposed to say Convent), polos (in the colors of red, burgundy, white, grey, pink, and light blue), and black pants. Simple items like lace tights and boots are forbidden by the administration. While wearing the uniform how am I suppose to find myself? By having school institutions enforce dress codes, it forces individuals to have a stronger barrier to get over in order to capture our own creativity.

In the adult world, school uniforms are not needed and instead consist of a realm where we need to express our creativity to survive. A successful “well-paid work tends to reject uniformity, and for good reason, the demands of the future include qualities such as assertiveness, creativity, individuality, originality, a spontaneous personality, being a self-starter, taking initiatives, being able to cope with change, etcetera.”²⁵ Individuality and creativity is not taught within the limits of a uniform policy. A uniform convinces teenagers that conformity, obedience, and authority are needed in order to create a successful society. Nobody is able to reach that moment of individualism when everyone is acting and looking the same. This generation needs to override uniforms in order to allow more room for creativity and individuality.

Chronic anxiety disorder is generated when humans hide who they are and how they feel in an excessive amount. The act of hiding your true self behind a facade produces a version of yourself that only pleases others. Therefore, “The most important kind of freedom is to be what you really are. You trade in your reality for a role. You trade in your sense for an act. You give up your ability to feel, and in exchange, put on a mask.”²⁶ The motion of wearing a disguise is used to protect us from the aspects of ourselves that feel abused, rejected, or misunderstood by the world around us. Our society has no time for sympathy engaging anxious people who are intelligent, sensitive, and lost.

Why don't individuals expose their true selves? Does anyone really know your true character? By losing the connection to our external and internal identity it forces humans to lose the attachment with our true selves. The sensation of fear regarding rejection and disapproval compels humans to compromise their individuality. Our negative emotions often force us to cover up the parts of ourselves of which we are not fond. The longer lasting and more powerful the facade is, the deeper our true selves are hidden.

²³ "School Uniforms Are Destroying Individuality." HubPages. Web. 21 Apr. 2015. <<http://madisonlee81.hubpages.com/hub/School-Uniforms-Are-Destroying-Individuality>>.

²⁴ "School Uniforms Are Destroying Individuality." HubPages. Web. 21 Apr. 2015. <<http://madisonlee81.hubpages.com/hub/School-Uniforms-Are-Destroying-Individuality>>.

²⁵ School Uniforms Are Destroying Individuality. (n.d.). Retrieved April 21, 2015, from <http://madisonlee81.hubpages.com/hub/School-Uniforms-Are-Destroying-Individuality>

²⁶ Chronic Anxiety Disorder: The Price You Pay for Hiding Your True Self. (n.d.). Retrieved April 15, 2015, from <http://www.drivingpeace.com/chronic-anxiety-disorder/#.VS4HuEtH3II>

A “face can speak a thousand emotions, but it can easily mask what the heart truly feels. Don’t be fooled, for the happiest face may be masking the most hurting heart.”²⁷

The message our face is trying to communicate is not always synced with our core. I put on a smile when the words to communicate that ‘I am in despair’ do not come into mind, or when I do not want people to have to handle how I truly feel because I do not want to be a burden. My inner self withholds how I truly feel until I can no longer keep it secure. I hold in my anxiety mostly. My anxious thoughts keep building up until they are released creating the motion of crying or even a panic attack. I want to show how I truly feel but I struggle with the concept of being too much to control because of fall-outs with previous friends. I look to art to release my deepest thoughts. I can express myself without having any limitations. However, everybody sees creativeness differently so nobody has to know how I feel and it can be restricted to only my understanding. I am able to expose my true self in the art world, but my compassion is still masked. My actions are my own, but how I feel is still hidden within myself. The moment I am comfortable with exposing how I feel is when I can truly be myself.

²⁷ Real.girl.real.thoughts. (n.d.). Retrieved April 23, 2015, from <https://realgirlrealthoughts.wordpress.com/page/35/>

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