

Are YOU Adapting to Life vs. Living YOUR Life?

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If the truth be known, humans are the only species who drink milk beyond their weaning from the breast. And once we are weaned, it's not human milk we drink! This is an example how humans tend to adapt themselves to the belief that milk builds stronger bones and healthier bodies, when in fact other sources of healthier and more natural foods to humans can do the same thing, if not better.

Other species of animals do not adapt themselves to environments that impede their survival. Northern birds fly south for the winter; desert animals migrate to other areas to maintain survival of the fittest. The cliff sparrows fly to Capistrano each fall to reach their destination for the spring time, arriving around the 15th of March (give or take a few days or weeks) each year. The swallows show a high degree of precision in the time that they complete their long migration from south of the equator to their California breeding area. Unlike the White Tail deer that live in our Northern hemisphere, who depend upon man to help them survive by a yearly culling of the herds through the "kill of the hunt" to allow for an increase in their survival rates. There are protected and maintained deer yards that aid winter survival for the fittest of deer. Without both of these protective measures, White Tail deer may not survive in the Northern hemisphere for very long. And as society continues to invade the territory of wild life, the animals act in ways that we believe are maladaptive, but in truth they are surviving within their environment as they know how. Their need to survive becomes their focus; therefore, it appears they are invading us in a maladaptive way, when, in fact, we humans have invaded them in a maladaptive way to create more "stuff" in our lives.

For many people, if not most, adapting to life has become their way of life. Many of us grew up with the belief, "This is the hand of cards I was dealt; I have no other choice!" Or that standard phrase, "You made your bed, now lie in it!" Whenever any of us believe we have no other choice along the path in life, we begin to adapt to our environment believing there is no other way out. We find ourselves trapped by the "trappings" of life. We look for pleasure from and within things. Form, objectives, substances often become ways of adapting, leaving the essence of our self, our spirit, our true inner energy waning. In our adapting we fail to see possibilities beyond the immediate self-gratification; we develop a strong voice that says "I can't" or "I'm not willing!" to do what I must do to face what life presents. When we can't accept life the way it is presented to us, to move beyond that line is nearly impossible. We must first accept "what is" to be open to "possibilities."

We begin our process of adapting when we are small children. We may suck our thumbs, fingers, and/or blanket, whatever brings us immediate satisfaction. As children we often have little to no voice as to how we control the environment in which we live; therefore most times we learn self-gratification in ways that may turn into a maladaptive process. It may be food that soothes us; it may be isolation that we believe protects us; it may be constant distress or anger (something you wouldn't ordinarily believe to be an adaptive process, yet it is) that feeds the ego searching for power and control; later it may be addictive substances (i.e., drugs, alcohol, sex, gambling, etc.) that entrap individuals in a maladaptive process. And for many people, men in particular, to find relief from the challenges of every day living, becoming overly entangled in

their work, which they justify as a “need” to survive. We also believe that it is best for our children to be into every conceivable sport; learn two or three musical instruments; be connected in two or three civic projects in order to live a functional and prosperous life. This sort of living has become a source of unbalance in the lives of too many families, creating discord, maladaptive behaviors, separation and divorce a disproportionate problem in the American way of life.

We often adapt to life believing there is one way of being; there is only one way of living out our lives. We let our inner voice keep us from moving toward possibilities; we let our inner voices keep us from living our true authentic self. Transformation can not happen when we have a limited belief system about our potential. Transformation takes place when we let go of our ego. The ego requires immediate self-gratification; the ego perceives an immediate need. It is a matter about feeling good, being in control, feeling better than someone else, or to find a way to soothe an emotional upheaval.

I think of the ego to be much like the smoke detector we have in our homes. Its main purpose is to detect smoke; it can not determine the source of the smoke. And many people have adopted the belief, “where there’s smoke, there’s fire!” We have come to know that not to be a truth. When the smoke detector starts beeping, we may immediately think “fire.” To be proactive, we have to determine the source of the smoke to determine if there is a real danger. If we react to the smoke detector, we may put ourselves in more danger by taking the wrong action. By reacting we are not looking for what is and taking proper action; we are reacting to what we perceive within our minds (our ego) to be the truth and often take an extreme form of action. We often adapt without thinking of the consequences of our choices, short-term or long-term.

To be open to living an authentic life, we must begin to be more aware. To be more aware, we must become more silent; we must listen, contemplate, and make choices that we come to know will best serve us. We must seclude ourselves from distractions long enough to see what which lies within; we must allow that which is within to surface and become conscious. We must become aware of our limited thinking. We are not our thinking; we are much more. We no longer need to adapt; we can begin living, take charge of our lives, and transform our being into that which serves us best.