

Muse

It's not just you

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So many people live in isolation with secret pains gnawing at their souls growing wild and unruly believing that they, alone, are lost, angry, hurt, mistaken, flawed, scared, ashamed, heart broken, self-conscious and imperfect. Living in isolation is like living in darkness. Nothing comes to light, nothing is challenged or changed and whatever is there festers and ferments. You know the old saying about being treated like a mushroom? Kept in the dark and fed manure? This is how living in isolation is. Growing alone in the dark with mental fertilization only causes personal shames to thrive and multiply.

Do you think you're boring, have nothing to offer or to say? Everyone has had these beliefs many times in their life. This is normal. Not even Robin Williams is that entertaining 24-7. If you have impossible standards, lower them! It is not your responsibility to entertain others either. Maybe they're not that interesting to you! Or maybe you just don't have a lot in common. This is not a social collapse! Feel free to be normal. Connect with people with common interests, contribute when you feel like it, and be quiet at other times (like everyone else). And remember, unless you are in fact a brown paper bag, you are interesting. Don't be afraid to be boring as dust either. We all have yawn-evoking comments and stories. It's next to meaningless to be average at times and far easier than expecting yourself to be the life of the party wherever you go.

Nobody loves you and they never will? When we see the world through disapproving filtered glasses, we tend to choose to see the glass-half-empty. There are those who look around and see everyone else is in a committed, meaningful relationship. They believe (erroneously) that they are the only single per-

son left standing. "Statistically speaking, Vancouver's never-married, separated, divorced, and widowed folk represent 58 percent of the population, or 293,320 people, according to Statistics Canada." - Georgia Straight, February 12, 2009. By this statistic, it is the married people

"It is never too late to be what you might have been."

- George Eliot

who are unusual. Ever think of that? If you're single, it's not because you're innately unlovable - that's a false belief. Perhaps you have intimacy issues or negative beliefs about yourself or you're just in between relationships but unless you are, literally, a woodland hobgoblin there is love out there somewhere. I'm no hobgoblin expert but I might even venture to say that even hobgoblins find love. But in the meantime, you are one of the majorities. You're normal! Congratulations!

And speaking of only seeing what we want to see... as far as you're concerned everyone is taller, shorter, skinnier, has more muscles, has less back-hair, less or

"As children from troubled families, we spent our lives wanting what was forbidden to us: love. And because we never received it, we still believe it is forbidden."

- Geneen Roth, from "When Food is Love. Exploring the relationship between eating and intimacy."

more chin hair (depending on what you want), is "prettier", "more handsome", dresses better, has a better-paying job... whatever it is that you feel you are lacking in, somehow it seems that everyone else is rich in this division and you are the only misfit on misfit island. We set out to make sure that we are right in our disparaging beliefs which seems kind of screwy considering it makes us miserable. So why do we do it? Somewhere along the line we got the message that we aren't good enough so we go about treating ourselves as if it's true and even finding ways to manifest it in our life. If we've been told we're inept, we'll go about believing that to be true - we'll struggle with it deep down in the dark woods of our mind but we will continue to believe we are incapable of anything else. We may even go about trying to find evidence to support our misled beliefs. Worst of all, we act it out. We practice a bad idea finding ways to make it come true.

Other people seem to have it easier than you? Everyone has issues, obstacles, problems and life to deal with. Some of us get dealt more issues than others and some have more advantages, it's true. It's a fallacy to think that life is fair. Most of us have to work hard, sacrifice, negotiate, recover, argue, deal, get sick, get injured, lose our keys, get robbed, be neglected, encounter rude people, have our needs disregarded and get overcharged at the check out stand. It happens to all of us. It's not fodder to feel more self-pity (although it's okay to have a wee pity-party every once in a while), it's just disappointing, annoying, inconvenient or hurtful and it will pass like a river if you let it. You're not worse off than anyone else. You're normal and living a normal life with the normal amount of dissatisfying experiences. If you're able to except these inevitabilities in life, feel what you feel,

dust yourself off and let go after they happen, your life will go much smoother. Instead of breaking every time something happens, be flexible and simply bend. Then bounce back.

“You don’t get to choose how you’re going to die. Or when. You can only decide how you’re going to live. Now.”

- Joan Baez

Do you think you’re somehow behind everyone else? Still have on your dark-filtered glasses? As long as you’re comparing yourself to others you will always find someone who’s doing better than you. Let’s see, we could make ourselves miserable by comparing our income to say...Bill Gates, our artistic ability to Leonardo Da Vinci and our popularity to George Clooney. We all have an innate desire to fit in and belong and we find comfort in knowing that somehow we are doing the same as our peers. It’s a sort of validation. But if we don’t, it doesn’t mean we have failed. It simply means we are taking a different path and if you want to change it then set out goals to do so but don’t beat yourself up. What’s wrong with being average? One of many? Embrace your middle-of-the-road-ness! Find ways to appreciate where you’re at.

“People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are. I don’t believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstance they want, and, if they can’t find them, make them.”

- George Bernard Shaw

Never mind the Jones’s (or the Gates’, Da Vinci’s or Clooney’s). Remember there’s no one else in the world who’s exactly like (your name here).

Afraid of getting hurt? You better be! Who wants to get hurt? That’s an important, natural reflex to protect ourselves. It’s good! It becomes a problem when we believe emotional pain is intolerable or that we are incapable of handling it or it’s this great awful thing we should avoid at all costs. Hurt happens to all of us at varying times in our lives. It’s inevitable, normal and natural and it can

“Sorrow fully accepted brings its own gifts. For there is alchemy in sorrow. It can be transmuted into wisdom, which, if it does not bring joy, can yet bring happiness.”

- Pearl S. Buck

be endured and overcome. It’s not fatal. It’s a normal bump in the road that only adds to the richness of our lives. If we have faith in ourselves and become better at self-nurturing when we are hurt, we become stronger and more resilient. Living your life in fear of something is the most painful prison of all. Embracing pain as we might embrace it in poetry or literature with all its shades of meaning can prove to enhance the value of life and the depth of your joys by contrast.

Nobody wants to hear your problems? If you minimize your problems, it will become far more difficult to find someone to listen. If you’re ashamed, embarrassed or unsure you’re less likely to reach out to someone for help. Are



you really trying to share with others? Did the words, “I have a problem and need to talk about it”, exit your lips? Do you know how satisfying it feels to have someone come to you for advice and

“There is no agony like bearing an untold story inside you.”

- Zora Neale Hurston

then you have that just right thing to say and they’re grateful? Give others that same opportunity to feel good. And tell them what you need. Sometimes, simply

telling them of a problematic situation you’re going through isn’t enough - people don’t know what you need so it’s really helpful to outright tell them what you need: a sympathetic ear, a place to vent or an open door to talk about things. And if you’re still faced with people who seem apathetic, it might be that you are picking the wrong people. Try to find supportive, mature, encouraging, patient types to talk to - they’re the best!

There’s no way to solve your problems? If I may get a little psychoanalytical here: the reason you’re in your position is because of, largely, what you believe about yourself (beyond of course, the usual environmental factors about society, culture and the like). If it’s repeatedly problematic that may be the result of some negative messages you concluded or received during your upbringing. Your defeatist view may be a way of recreating a victim role where you are held back and limited (as maybe you were as a child) and subconsciously you have become your own abuser and continue to fulfill that role towards your own self. Yes, I said it! If you continue to be the ‘victim’ you also get (strange but true) to continue to feel sorry for yourself, to not engage in challenging activities, not confront your fears, not make changes or be vulnerable. So, you see, there’s a pay off to being a victim. Sometimes we don’t want to leave a crummy job because it’s so cushy. And generally most folks are not conscious

“What difference [does] it make if the thing [you’re] scared of is real or not?”

- Toni Morrison

of this otherwise they’d change it in a heartbeat. If you find that you repeatedly run through the same problems over and over, that’s where therapists may help.

Oh, and what is up with this dire thinking about the future: no one will ever love me, I will never find the job I like, I’ll never have a supportive community, and I will always feel this way? Talk about fatalistic! I’m sorry but unless your name is Madame Zora, fortune teller, and you can foresee your fates through your crystal ball at one dollar per minute then one might have cause to question your future-telling skills. When you believe

your path will be rocky and unfulfilling, it's likely you'll choose that path to

“Is it weird in here, or is it just me?”
- Stephen Wright

fulfill your beliefs but if you are focused on solving your problems then you're more likely to take the path that offers solutions. Make sense? Great. Madame Zora thanks you. That will be one dollar please.

“If there were none who were discontented with what they have, the world would never reach for anything better.”
- Florence Nightingale

Comparing yourself to others is a good way to start feeling really low about yourself. It is also an indication that you are blind to your own value and place your significance on the fluctuating basis of comparison to others. Much like the financial market, this is nothing less than a nail-biting roller coaster that never, ever ends. If you value yourself, warts and all, you can find peace. Self acceptance is okay with being short, fat and bald. Consider Kermit the Frog. It's not easy being green! We can relate but I think we get the sense that Kermie has accepted his green-ness.

“We are always afraid to start something that we want to make very good, true, and serious.”
- Brenda Ueland

In the end, living your life believing these negative beliefs gets you more negative self-sabotage. If you want to make a change, change your beliefs. Normalize them. Everybody has weaknesses, foibles, and bugaboos. Keep it in perspective. Keep your feelings manageable, proportionate and safely cuddled in the crook of your arm. Learn how to nurture and value yourself. Perhaps your esteem needs a boost. Take a break. Vent. Blow off some steam. Have a good

cry and get back into the game with the rest of us 'misfits'.

There's a great question to ask yourself if you're stuck with your funky belief: “Does this belief encourage personal growth, emotional maturity, independence of thinking and action, and stable mental health?” I'll bet you a Madame Zora Dollar that your answer is a resounding, “NO!” What belief can you hold to make you answer, “Yes!”



“Luck is not change
It's Toil
Fortune's expensive smile
Is earned.”
- Emily Dickinson

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