

Muse

What you should want.

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Swirling around in our minds are hundreds of ideas about who we should be; how we should behave, look or feel; what we should have or not; what we should believe; or who we should have in our lives. We need many of these ideas to find a place in our community and feel accepted, however; some of these beliefs are faulty and require further examination. We go about our lives trying to fulfill these misled beliefs often without even knowing it. Instead of having these thoughts, *we are these thoughts*. Like the Wizard of Oz, there is a little man running the show that we can't even see.

In essence we objectify ourselves and our thoughts and feelings. We describe ourselves in terms of what we "should be" (the objective self) rather than what we want or need (the subjective self). The trap is the black and white thinking of *we should* or *should not* do something because it is *good* or *bad*. The fact is that many of life's activities are perfectly acceptable if done because we want to and until we are sated (and not engorged). Things we do to treat ourselves should not be considered as "bad" but as ways that we take care of ourselves. We often feel deprived because we're spending all our energy trying to do the right thing or listen to an objective belief rather than listening to our subjective self and striking a balance within.

We all have our own personal terms of "shoulds" but here are a few common examples starting with *I should be*: attractive, trim, muscular, hairless, hairy, wealthy, organized, clean, tidy, 'together', invulnerable, happy all the time, popular, smart, informed, aware of world events, constantly active, involved in many activities, successful, there for others all the time, hard working, charming, able to fit in, able to engage in interesting conversation with anyone, able

to speak comfortably in public, strong, unflappable, have no problems, know the answers, sure, on track, wise, perfect, as good as or better than others, able to fix or do anything, etc. While some of these 'shoulds' are not bad to desire

"There came a time when the risk to remain tight in the bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom."

~Anais Nin

or have, the objective voice may tell us there's something wrong with us if we don't have these all the time. It doesn't allow us to be our normal, flawed selves but instead makes it into some kind of pathology. A 'normal' belief would be to feel that we are generally okay and it's possible to work on things if we so desire and if they fulfill our needs.

"The day you were born, a ladder was set up to help you escape from this world."

~Rumi

Here are some of the more popular "shoulds" that serve to negate our intuitive inner voice: It's a nice day, you should go outside. You shouldn't do that, what will others think? You should be grateful for that (implied: even if you don't like it). You should eat everything on your plate. You should never say something to upset others (implied: no matter what they've done to you). You should be nice (happy, sweet, etc). You shouldn't (should) eat that. You shouldn't (or should) be hungry. You shouldn't (or should) be thirsty. You shouldn't be hot (or cold). You shouldn't be tired. You shouldn't get angry (or

sad or disappointed, etc. etc.). You shouldn't show your emotions, it means you're weak or too sensitive. Nice girls don't get angry. Real men don't cry. You shouldn't cry, you're causing a scene. You shouldn't show affection in public. You shouldn't wear that. You should or shouldn't spend your money in that way.

These viewpoints are fairly common and come from sources such as our families; religions; schools; workplaces and the media. With this steady stream of "shoulds" crowding out our natural desires, we are sometimes left feeling void, resentful and emotionally impoverished. Sadly, so many of us do not even know what our individual needs are or even our present personal condition.

Optimally we want to be aware of and fulfill the subjective self. This is the part of us that knows or experiences that it is thirsty, hungry, tired, or needing a certain type of stimulation such as play, creative expression, exercise or rest. It knows what it wants and when it wants it. No one activity is *right* or *wrong* (outside of anything that hurts another). In actuality, fun and sating those personal desires are a necessary part of living a happy life. Some might argue that if everyone listened to their own desires all the time, we'd live in a very selfish world. When we empower ourselves to be responsible for our own fulfillment, we no longer blame others or turn to substances or need to escape. We no longer use negative coping devices and are thus enabled to behave for the better. Also, it could be argued that altruist desires and the need to contribute to the world are an innate part of many individuals and if they're honouring their needs, they will honour these values. Ellen Degeneres once said, upon hearing about a friend who was in labour for eighteen hours, "I don't even want to do anything that feels *good* for that long!"

“We find what we search for - or,
if we don't find it, we become it.”

~ Jessamyn West

In the end, though, the key to happiness is understanding your own authentic wants and needs and fulfilling those on a daily, moment to moment basis. Instead of thinking, “I shouldn't be sitting here doing nothing, I should be getting something accomplished”, consider the idea that you're actually fatigued and truly do need to sit quietly and rest and refresh yourself. To continue doing things when you're exhausted is to deprive yourself of your essential needs. Instead of thinking, “I shouldn't go to that party because I probably won't know what to say and won't have the right things to wear”, consider your need to have a night out to mingle with some folks in a festive mood; take pleasure in yummy refreshments and having fun dancing, singing or laughing.

“It is the soul's duty to be loyal to its own desires. It must abandon itself to its master passion.”

~ Rebecca West

Your subjective needs are to have the ability to feel what you feel, whatever it is, with simple curiosity, safety and compassion. Your objective voice says you shouldn't feel that (angry, sad, afraid, disappointed, unsure, etc.) and tells you to push it down or fake it (welcome fodder for depression and anxiety by the way - these conditions eat suppressed emotions like the Cookie Monster on a plate of cookies).

“It's a sad day when you find out that it's not accident or time or fortune but just yourself that kept things from you.”

~ Lillian Hellman

When we deny our desires, we alienate them - we disown ourselves. When we ignore our desires, we practice deprivation. If someone is telling you, “You should...” consider the validity of his or her statement but only keep what you want and leave the rest. Instead of asking yourself, “Should I?” ask yourself, “What do I want?” Try to do this often

and to fulfill those desires when you can. This is key to learning to soothe yourself.

Try to bring awareness to your beliefs. Start to jot them down. You'll likely have more than you'll ever write down but be aware of them and question them: why do you believe this? Where did this belief come from? Does it hold true today? Does having this belief leave you feeling satisfied, self-assured, self (and other) respecting? If your belief doesn't leave you feeling good about yourself - perhaps it's time for a change. How can you modify your belief to become one that is more self accepting and compassionate?

It's important to live a life truly inherent to your true desires if you wish to be happy.

“Think of the inside of our house as your soul and the outside architecture as something like your bone structure, your genetic inheritance...Our true home is inside each of us, and it is your love of life that transforms your house into your home.”

~ Alexandra Stoddard



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