



Being True to Yourself Exercise

In order to feel centered, grounded and content, it is important to know yourself well and be true to yourself – your values, ideals and goals – in relationships, roles and activities. Most of us have many selves that we’ve accumulated – layer upon layer – over the course of our lives. At various times, we may be a **people-pleaser** who tries to be good, kind and well-behaved, a **rebel** who wants to chart new paths and reject authority, a **fixer** who tries to make everything better for everyone else, a **peacemaker** who avoids conflict at all costs, or the **funny one** who tries to make others happy all the time.

Sometimes, we get so caught up in these various roles that we lose sight of who we really are or want to be – particularly if we’ve been rewarded by others for these behaviors. When we get disconnected from our true or authentic self, we can begin to feel empty, dissatisfied and confused. Without being true to ourselves, we also can’t offer the kind of openness and honesty that truly intimate relationships require.

Being authentic means being self-aware (knowing and trusting one’s own motives, emotions), being honest in evaluating one’s own strengths and weaknesses and acting in ways that are in line with personal values and needs, even at the risk of being criticized or rejected.

Think about the following:

How would others describe you and does that reflect the person you are or would like to be?

Make a list of things your value (for example, political ideals, the environment, music, art, literature, religious beliefs, relationships). Think about which of these you would like to focus on more in your life and choose one thing you would like to do to act on those values.

Make a list of your talents and gifts (for example, talent in the arts, the gift of hospitality, the gift of lifting people's spirits, the gift of mathematical acumen). Then choose a way to put that gift to use in a way you haven't used it in the past. For example, if you are good at math, perhaps you could tutor a child or volunteer to help balance an elderly person's checking account.

Make a list of aspects of yourself you would like to work on (for example, being more in touch with your feelings, communicating more effectively, being more patient, being more assertive, being less judgmental, channeling your anger in more effective ways). Choose one aspect of yourself you would like to focus on and think about the steps you can take to begin making changes.

Make a list of things you've always wanted to try but never have (for example, a sport, new style of clothing, a new hobby, new foods to try or a different way of cooking). Pick one and give it try. Give yourself permission to experiment and don't be afraid to fail.

Do your answers surprise you? Would they surprise those who know you?