

Getting it together

Listening to inner voice is a step to happiness

The more I look around at the lives most people live, the more dismayed I feel about the amount of unhappiness human beings put up with.

I see married couples who are so emotionally brutal to each other that they both should be screaming in pain, but neither spouse even says "ouch."

I see employees who are so bored with their jobs that they ought to be sleeping. But they just keep on shuffling papers, tightening bolts and punching clocks like robots.

Worst of all, I see people of all ages smiling and pretending to be happy when they are feeling so lonely and un-

loved that they can't even allow themselves to think about it.

By
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Ph.D.



Why do they do it? How can they tolerate such intolerable situations? Part-

ly because they are afraid of changing and partly because they don't really know any better.

Most people have only seen happiness in the conclusion of Shirley Temple movies. A fantasy that has no place in real life. When people grow up with parents who have tolerated boring jobs and lonely marriages, how can they know what real happiness is?

No wonder most think happiness is just comfort or the absence of pain.

In fact, the pursuit of comfort seems to be the modern American pastime. Watching hours of television, whether the programs are good or not, numbs frustrations and turns loneliness

Alcohol and other drugs provide a soothing relief from the tension of unhappy lives, not to mention the dulling effects of ritualized lifestyles, being a nice guy, or being careful, safe and good.

Maybe that wouldn't be so bad if it worked. But it rarely does. Surrounded by material goods like cars and color televisions, people still feel they are missing something. Maybe, if they could just buy a larger house, or have another baby, or join another club, then they could be rid of the dull, empty ache.

IT IS this ache which intrudes on their quiet moments. It is felt when they are trying to fall asleep or when they are alone with their thoughts.

It's an inner nuisance that must be buried under sleeping pills, busyness and distractions. If it had a voice, it might say, "I am so lonely and bored with my life and I feel so unhappy."

The most frustrating thing about this is that people spend so much time trying to ignore this inner voice.

THEY SEE it as a nuisance when, actually, it should be their best friend. It is the part of our personality that won't settle for a life of comfort.

It's the part that needs to be involved in truly meaningful activities. And, most important, it's the part that needs to feel special to someone, the part that needs to be touched and cared for.

Ironically, the main reason that the inner voice is so lonely is that it is a rejected part of the personality. Instead of listening to it, the comfortable person tries to ignore it.

He tells it to go away. He feels that he could be happy if it weren't for that inner ache, that nagging pest.

In fact, those who have become acquainted with their inner ache know that it is made up of all their petty needs, all their jealousies and other childish feelings. It is the dumping ground for the weaknesses and sore spots that people try to leave behind when they grow up.

After all, they reason, an adult should be able to rise above childish needs. And so, they systematically reject a whole part of their personality in order to live up to a hollow model of adulthood.

Reversing the process of rejection is easy to describe, but difficult to do.

It simply requires that you listen to the childish, rejected part of you. This is difficult because it is so painful. To truly bring your inner child out of the closet, you must experience the pain of its loneliness, for it is your loneliness too.

THIS REQUIRES that you turn off your television and give yourself the time to listen to your feelings. If you feel lonely, there is a reason for it. If you feel bored, accept it and understand it.

Then tell someone about it. Share your inner ache with a lover or friend. Help them to accept it. Don't be put off if they have a hard time doing this at first. Remember, they are also trying to reject their own inner ache.

Finally, after you have given an outside voice to inner feelings, do something about it. If you feel bored, look for something to do that would be fun and meaningful.

If you feel lonely, find some intimacy, share yourself with another

person. Think of yourself as the adult who is responsible for keeping your inner, childish self happy and loved. I realize that this is not an easy answer. But it is the only one. For almost every grown-up, the path to inner happiness is through acknowledging, accepting and loving your own unlovable, childish self.

Questions for Bob Trenz may be sent to The Rochester Observer & Eccentric, 410 N. Main, Rochester, Mich. 48061.

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