



Mental Wealth

Newsletter

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YOUR LIFE CAN BE DIFFERENT..

Should - the gateway to self-judgement by Karina Stell

I grew up with my full complement of 'shoulds' as most of us did. Mine had their own theme, etiology and of course purpose for those who taught them to me. As a child they became my indisputable rule book and those whose 'shoulds' differed from mine, were not only wrong but were frightening to me.

As I grew into a teenager, of course I rebelled against all or most of my 'shoulds' and challenged the veracity of each with what I said and how I behaved. Whilst this is a fundamental part of individuating from our parents, it was an important part of the evolution of my own 'shoulds'. These it's true, flew in the face of my parents' purely by my desire to irk them. I feel some shame as I admit that, but I also smile as I remember my children doing the same to me.

What is most interesting, is that I replaced one set of 'shoulds' with another without noticing that whatever group I accepted or rejected, both

directed me to judgement of others and harshest of all, judgement of myself.

It is not as if I climbed a remote mountain and sat with the wise men to consider my shoulds deeply before adopting them. On the contrary, I seemed to adopt them either as a need to be vexing to my parents or to adopt a popular view of the day held by society and/or my friends. How then was I to let these randomly adopted values guide me throughout my life and fill me with such self-loathing at times that I felt I was not good enough?

What I now know is that, for me at least, 'should' is a dirty word. Who said I should? Let me consider how I feel, what my true values are, what speaks to my deepest self and then I will decide how I go in life; how I react to the world both small and large.

We hear in our work the notion of not being good enough so often and it clangs so loudly with our own experiences around this idea. What we hope we can bring to our clients is the understanding

that self-judgement and judgement generally separates us from ourselves and others. Connection is our goal in Group and indeed life and 'should' certainly is counterproductive to that end.

What would happen if you noticed in a week each time you imposed a 'should' on yourself or others and then noticed what feelings come up inside you when you do this.

My guess would be that the feeling is uncomfortable in some way. How helpful are your 'shoulds'? Do they define who you want to be? Do they make you the type of person you would want to know?

News

Mental wealth is now providing training. If your work or friends would like us to come and do a half day training or short talk on mindfulness please let Michael or Karina know!

Who Am I?

By Michael Cohn



Who am I?

In a few days I leave for a trip to Europe and I'm back on the 3rd of June.

I am musing about my identity which will somehow magically change while I am on the airplane and I will arrive at my destination as Michael Multi-Entity (I quite like my name!).

Yep, born in South Africa, 10 years of residence in Israel (formative years for my children), nearly 18 years of residence in Australia where I have settled (I hope!), and my German passport will be my 'vade mecum', my handy reference of me while overseas.

It is so comforting to know that I have packaged so neatly the different elements which make up me and can somehow define myself definitively in one little document.

But that has already proved to me to be illusory. I mention that my definitive document of identity, my passport, that most universally accepted and ultimate descriptor and encompasser of 'me', actually failed me in the tritest of circumstances. This instrument which I use for passage world-wide, this inviolable testimonial of identity, failed me as a definitive form of identification.

It's true.

My passport was not a sufficient identity document to facilitate opening up a bank account in Australia and I had to provide a second form of identification before my account was opened.

I know that my little précis' above is of profound importance and inestimable value to readers of this blog. But perhaps it might serve to tease out the question of 'Who Am I?'

Because the fact of having had a serious bank official inform me, with a perfectly straight face, that my passport was inadequate in terms of identifying me, set off an extended musing of who I really am, who I think I am, and whom I could become or experience myself to be, once unshackled from my illusions of me.

This is a subject of a later post, and it forms the foundations of many religions and psychotherapies.