

## **Authenticity:**

### **What does it mean and how can we work towards living a more authentic life?**

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Authenticity is simply to live genuinely, honestly and in alignment with our true characteristics and self. It may seem like an easy principle, however in reality is much more difficult to put into practice. This is often because we often go for many years not knowing who we really are and what we stand for as a person. When we aren't quite sure of ourselves and our place in the world, it is difficult to live in an authentic way.

Inauthentic living can manifest in our lives in our actions and choices we make. We may engage in the wrong relationship, go down a career path unsuited to our self, or implement repetitive unhelpful behaviours in our daily life. Many people also use maladaptive coping strategies to deal with the impact of inauthentic living, such as alcohol, drugs, food or sex. This may help us in the short-term to avoid addressing underlying issues, however in the long-term can lead us into a downward spiral that becomes increasingly difficult for us to make our way out of.

The way in which we can access authenticity and begin to make changes in our lives is through awareness, which is the development of a deeper understanding of our self. Through this process, we come to learn who we actually are as a person, not who our parents, society or even we had wanted ourselves to be. Initially feelings of disappointment may arise, in the discovery that we are not the right fit for something we thought we wanted in our life. We can feel despairing, discouraged and demoralized that we do not have all the necessary qualities to pursue something in life that we believed was what we wanted.

With time and the development of greater self-awareness and insight, we can develop an understanding of all characteristics, both positive and negative that constitute who we are as a whole. Using this knowledge we can focus on expanding and developing our natural skill set, and set out to find our place in this world. When we free our minds and hearts, and proceed with an open, and genuine attitude, opportunities arise to lead us in new directions.

With greater self-awareness we discover possibilities in life that we had never considered before. The most surprising discovery often occurs when we look back and can't imagine our life having turned out any differently, once we are living an authentic life aligned with our true values and purpose.