

Finding the Self Behind the Mask By Amy G. Martin APRN

Have you ever thought about the masks we all wear, the façade we present to the world? What is it you want to appear to be? Is it the happy go lucky one, when underneath you really feel empty? Is it the tough exterior when the real you is just a creampuff? Or maybe you appear to be the caring, loving one, when you really want to spit nails?

All of us at times wear certain masks, and for many different reasons. Self protection is usually the most common motive; who wants to be judged, or rejected? Other times we just don't want to let people into our heads or our hearts, so we don the mask of impenetrability. Many times, if we feel unworthy in some way, we just feel safer keeping what we consider the real us, hidden.

Imagine how much energy it takes to sustain this falsehood, to the point where sometimes we begin to believe it ourselves! Have you ever looked in the mirror, seen the real you and felt disgusted, only to go back out into the world and smile?

So what is the cost of wearing a mask and why should we even consider taking it down and revealing our true selves? How might it benefit us to reveal who we really are and what we really feel? The first step would be to try a little introspection and self honesty. In seeing the truth, we can begin to take the steps toward living the truth.

In her book, The Art of Emotional Healing, Lucia Capacchione talks about *suppression*, or stuffing down of emotions, versus *repression*, or denial of our unruly feelings.

“Like the variety of bamboo that spreads through a massive network of underground branching roots, we cut our emotions down here only to have them show up yards away, through the concrete, gravel and bricks of our life. Where will our hidden feelings pop up next: in the bedroom or at a board meeting? At church or on the way to work? On the opposite side of the spectrum are people who couldn't feel an emotion if their lives depended on it. What happens to those who have numbed or stuffed their emotions because it's been just too painful, scary, or unacceptable to feel them? Some of these people turn to addiction or medication to sedate their feelings. Others store the emotions in the closets of their bodies and suffer from stress disorders. Remember, emotions will come out, sooner or later. They've got to keep moving.”

So what's your method of dealing with those unruly feelings? And how do you hide them from your self and others? The first thing to do is look in the mirror to see if you are masking your emotions, and if you are, asking yourself why. The next step is to begin to nurture and strengthen yourself by focusing on your gifts and talents, all the good things in your life. (Ask your friends or family if you can't think of any.) Once your sense of self is healthy enough, and your core is strong, you can attempt, in the privacy of your own safe space, to reveal the real you.

We all sometimes feel it is easier to fit in than to be ourselves. The truth is, it's not real acceptance anyway, especially if we're changing our persona just for the approval! What we all tend to forget is that we, as unique individuals, can do so much more than we, as clones of one another.

So why not take an honest look at yourself, see where you can be more true, and take a risk to show who you really are. Sure things might change, but that's where all those wonderful opportunities for personal growth come in. As we take off our masks, we can breathe a lot easier, feel freer and lighter and finally become our authentic selves.

Amy Martin is a Master RoHun Therapist and Nurse Practitioner with over 25 years of experience. RoHun Therapy is a rapid acting, spiritually based psychotherapeutic tool which uncovers and brings to light those blocks, which have prevented personal growth and change. Her private practice, "**Healing Therapies**", is located at 8 West Main St, Suite 1-3 Niantic, Ct. Call for a consultation. Phone Number (860)691-0743, or go to www.Time4Healing.com for more information