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# THE COURAGE TO BE ONESELF

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**Anxiety, depression and many other conditions are closely related with the anxiety that one should conform to expectations, whether of internal or external origin, to be someone different. It often seems difficult to simply follow one's own values, needs, interests and aspirations, although they lead to higher levels of happiness in the long-run**

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## Contents

Introduction .....	3
The Basic Parameters .....	3
Being Oneself .....	3
I am OK.....	4
Courage.....	4

## Introduction

It is not easy being oneself. There are many expectations we face from inside or outside ourselves. It sometimes seems that others may know better what is good for us than we know ourselves, at other times one may have high expectations that cause prolonged stress and always the feeling of not being enough. In all this, the future becomes blurry and clear signposts disappear into the mist. Anxiety, depression and many other conditions are frequently the result of disconnecting with oneself, at least with the part where one can feel the own needs, true interests and values, and the aspirations, which could provide motivation and the energy to do things and engage in thoughts that bring happiness in the long-run.

## The Basic Parameters

The personality does not change much over time, if at all, and the core sense of self probably even less so. Basic parameters, such as needs, values and aspirations are a reflection of how we see the world and what we see as meaningful in it. They are important to get a person motivated, and they provide an overall sense of direction for the future, which also increases motivation and lends purpose to one's actions, thoughts, and ultimately to oneself. Merely being alive has meaning in itself and can provide substance for the basic parameters. However, as the world is getting increasingly complex, and maybe also simpler in the long-run, the specific possibilities increase. Spirituality can play a significant role as it attributes meaning to things. In any case, it is important to reflect on one's present and past, as well as the vision of the future, to explore and elucidate the basic parameters.

## Being Oneself

Being oneself means focusing on oneself, but this is very different from being selfish. It means inquiring into oneself and caring for oneself to an extent that makes helping others, for example, possible. This requires greater insight into what finds relevant and meaningful, which can be found by looking at what one has enjoyed in the past and what one aspires to in the future. This requires connecting with oneself to also get information on the emotions attached with past events. Communication helps to find meaning in the world around, which makes it easier to be oneself.

## I am OK

Anxiety, depression and many other conditions are a result that many people no longer feel they are OK the way they are. This may be the result of many different factors, from adverse childhood experiences to unfulfillable expectations at the workplace. However, once the sense of 'I am OK' is lost one becomes anxious of deficits and problems in oneself which cannot be identified because there are none. We cannot change who we are, nor should we. What can be changed, however, are the strategies one uses in life. Often, these strategies are a product of one's interactions with the environment, which have not or only been partially revised over time. To change old strategies usually requires some communication with oneself or others, because communication creates new meaningful information which leads to change.

## Courage

Being oneself is not easy. It may be a difficult step to accept oneself as one is. However, acceptance means recognizing what does not change, and this opens the doors to change for the things that can be changed. People usually underestimate greatly what can be changed, mostly because they are disconnected from those aspects of the self which are stable and reliable, the things that are valuable and meaningful to the individual. To find the needed courage it is important to explore and identify these parameters, while beginning to experiment with and explore life.



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