

Chapter 7

How You Got to “You Are Here”

If it is natural for us to grow into our greatness, why is it so hard to *feel* great? If there is so much support from the larger system, why then is it so hard to receive and accept it? Why do we experience tension between our desires and our “real” lives? Of course, we have inherited a larger system built on scarcity as we discussed in Section I, but why is this feeling of not quite “enough-ness” so universal?

The answer isn’t particularly philosophical or spiritual. It is biological. Simply put there are several deeply interwoven and constantly recycling reasons why almost every one of us has issues about money (and relationships and health), regardless of how many dollars we have or what position of power we hold.

Wired to Belong

First, all human beings are born with an inherent need to belong. It is programmed into the intricate circuitry of our DNA. This evolutionary impulse shows up on Day One as the primal need of an infant who depends completely on a small

circle of caregivers. These people, irrespective of their morals, ethics, common sense or lack thereof are literally our whole world and our lifeline to survival. Getting noticed means we get fed and as studies now show, it also means that we develop more fully on an emotional level.

Children then are *born* longing to fit in, to physically be part of a tribe. We probably never lose this innate desire, but as adults we begin to discern different groups and make choices based on many factors. In the beginning though, we start out with extremely limited vision—both figuratively and literally. Our world view is very, very small.

As we develop, the need for approval and attention gets slightly more nuanced, but it is still this need to be accepted by the “Family of Origin” Tribe—and our subsequent *perceptions* of successes or failures at that endeavor—that imprint our psyche and define our belief systems. The experiences that we have as children become the building blocks for how we conceptualize and create our world.

Everyone knows the horror stories of caretakers who failed miserably to provide love and nurturing to children who eventually grew up to be psychopaths and deviants, but the negative experiences arising from reasonably good parents living ordinary lives is equally profound and startlingly common.

Programmed to Conform

Bruce Lipton, the cell biologist I mentioned earlier, tells us that there is yet another contributor to this early childhood imprinting and that is that we are actually programmed. Not in some evil conspiracy theory scenario, but biologically. Apparently, until we are about 5 or 6 years old, we cannot access the “executive function” of the prefrontal cortex area of our brains. This means that we do not have the capacity in those early years to actually distinguish our Selves, our own ideas of good and

bad, our own future goals, our prediction of social outcomes or the future consequences of our own actions. We do not have the information processing ability to differentiate between conflicting thoughts rambling around inside our heads or to do much in the way of delayed gratification for a more long-term goal. We do not fully realize that we are growing into separate individuals, with minds of our own that ultimately might not agree with the thinking of our caregivers. The prefrontal cortex learns intellectually as it takes in external information. But as children, we are operating on older parts of the brain that learn by rote repetition, by habit, in other words, by programming.

According to Lipton, this means that everything that we learn up until about the time that we start school was programmed. It was precisely a data dump. No fault, no evil step-mother. Just part of the process of being human. And in the same way up driving our lives without realizing that we are operating on old tapes. Literally!

Destined to Create

Humans are natural meaning makers. Everyone makes up stories to understand experiences. The problem is that we tend to make the stories mean something about our own *intrinsic value*. What might have only been a stressed out parent's short fuse turns into the belief that we are somehow "not good enough." These early experiences literally become our identity. So early negative experiences get turned into false stories about who we are, whom we can trust and how the world operates. And this is where almost everyone gets off track. These beliefs become patterns and we come to expect our life experiences to back up our "truths." All of us did this as children; most of us continue the process far into adulthood. The characters might change but the process is repeated.

Because we are so impressionable (creative), we also pick up

burdens that weren't ours to begin with. When Aunt Sally tells us that we should be seen and not heard—because that was the “truth” that she was taught—then it also becomes our guiding light. When the approval of a parent or caregiver is our biggest goal in life, we often strive for behavior that looks like that of our caregiver, even if it is behavior based in shame, fear, guilt, resentment or anger. Rather than recognizing that we are honestly borrowing these beliefs, we assume that these issues really *are* our own. Unfortunately, from that point forward we begin to create supporting experiences to mirror our beliefs.

It is worth mentioning a left-brain style argument here about how we do create our own reality. Obviously, as human children who need to belong, we develop certain points of view and belief systems about how the world operates. Almost all of these beliefs are directly handed down to us. But any thought, handed down or not, repeated often enough becomes a belief (and a literal deep rut in our brains). The tribe further reinforces this system of beliefs. Since we need to belong to the tribe, this system of beliefs will directly affect how we show up in the world and what action we take as we live our lives. These actions will directly affect our results and experiences. In this basic way, our thoughts really do create our reality.

Five Major Competing Commitments

As if that isn't enough to unravel, life brings us more commitments and more tribes to attract as we grow. At around age 5 or 6, this same time period that we are just beginning to access our “executive Function”, most of us encounter an entirely new tribe into which we also *need* to be accepted. This tribe is called “School” and has an additional set of rules of proper behavior to adopt, new authority figures to understand and multiple sets of peers to impress—all of which we need to accomplish in order to be accepted and belong. We might not