



Get Real: The Power of Authenticity

c) Can Stock Photo, Inc./agencyby

Written by Kris Costa

Think of a time when you have felt deeply connected inside of yourself, safe, joyful, and full of love. Often times one can connect with oneself in this way by engaging with purity, perhaps with a child, or by spending time in nature, or while interacting and communicating with a dog or a horse, where there are no pretenses. There is a strength in that feeling, a deep rooted security whereby your core is so close to the surface of your skin that a fleeting wind may just make you and the world one. When there are no desires, and simply a state of being absolutely balanced and satisfied, you are in an authentic state.

However, most of us at one time or another do not allow ourselves to be in complete harmony with ourselves. We do not give ourselves the permission to do so. Why is that and what can we do to improve our well-being? Why can't we just get real?

As soon as we begin to socialize as children, we also begin to realize that we are different from others. Learning that we are different is an exciting, important and necessary developmental experience. Hopefully our differences are celebrated from

childhood on, but often times, we also see that being different can make one a target. Unfortunately, many of our young people today are victims of bullying because of their differences, which can lead children to stuff themselves down, cover their creativity, and experience anxiety and shame. They counter the discomfort with conformity. The world is robbed of their uniqueness, at least for a time, until they sort out who they are, hopefully finding their own voice with confidence and fortitude. These experiences are painful, and thus may be one of the reasons that adults today often conform out of latent fear and rejection.

To be authentic is to honor yourself and to do so, one must take inventory. Who are you? What do you believe in and why? What will you loose if you really live a life that is reflective of your answers?

There are no human copies, and to hide oneself behind a veil of another's belief, (or judgement) is to live a duplicate life dictated by the ongoing fancies of another. It is a personal prison.

Fear challenges authenticity. What fear really is asking is "What if

nobody likes me?” or “What if I am rejected?”

I challenge you to challenge fear and begin your journey into authenticity.

Get up front and personal, with yourself.

Look in the mirror, and pay attention to who you see. Look into your heart and think about who you love to spend time with, who are the people who have left a mark on your life. Tell them so. Tell them what they mean to you. Perhaps face to face, perhaps in a letter or a poem, or a drawn picture. Create something with your hands. It is not enough to love someone from a distance. Put yourself into however you want to express your heart, and then share it. People see in others what they want to see. If what they see is loving, they will also see that love in themselves. What kind of gift is better than that?

Being is not the same as doing.

Of course it is important to be mindful, but authenticity is evidenced by creation. If all the things you think about, and all the qualities you think you have stay in your mind, you will never experience them as more than a thought. To live an authentic life, you must be a participant in it. If your life is to have meaning to you, it needs to be evidenced. This is where time comes in. The gift of time is to evidence your authenticity and bring yourself to life. This is your presence, and it is a gift to others. This does not mean to fill your life with so many tasks that you spend your time in nothing more than a distracted state, on the contrary, it means to think about why you do what you do. It is true there are necessities that must be taken care of, but if you are too busy with errands and work and taking care of others, you are not creating a life that is close to your own heart.

Mindfulness.

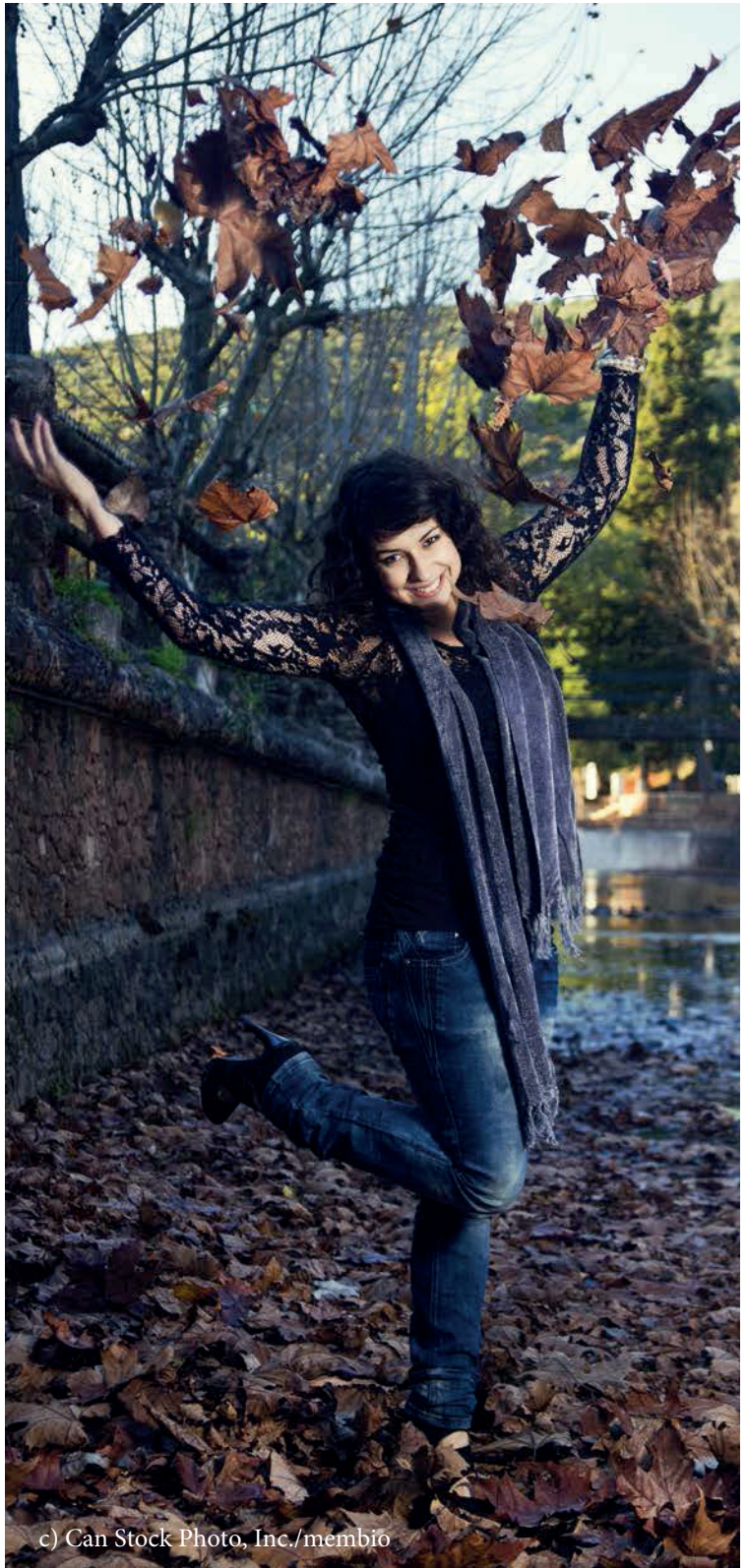
There comes a point in life where decisions must be made. Decisions are interesting. They usually do not present with clarity and brightness but rather they start off as nagging and dull. There is an uneasiness present and something just doesn't feel right. The prelude to making a decision is innately uncomfortable because there is a demand for our attention. The true self is asking an unconscious question and the body is tugging at you. The pressure builds. What that feeling is really asking is “What is in the way of my authenticity?” Powerful external pressures are pushing against your internal compass. Once you identify what the external pressures are, you have a decision to make. Decisions are meant to be difficult because self-deception is short-lived and a waste of precious time.

Bravery and freedom sit hand in hand.

Bravery can be defined as being ready to face and endure danger or pain. Another definition can be thought of as listening to that little voice inside your head and doing what it says. In terms of being authentic, following that little voice can initially illicit pushback from those around us, but in the long term the gain is emotional freedom. The thought of making the decision of change is often more frightening than the act of actually doing something different. Truthfully, we do not know what the reaction of others will be like, but we do know that we will be spending our time being true to ourselves. If that inconveniences some one else, that is about them. The first step is the hardest, and the most liberating.

Self-loyalty and honoring the only you that has ever or will ever exist is what authenticity is all about. Be loyal to your beliefs, filter them with kindness, and even if there is a storm of external rhetoric, you will sleep well at night. Once you have made the journey into your authentic life, the world may look very different to you, and you may find new and exciting ways to lift up the lives of those around you.

~KBC



c) Can Stock Photo, Inc./membio