



Does Anyone Need Personal Development?

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Even though the vast majority of my clients are business people, I sometimes get to work with young children – by “young” I mean children who have not reached that psychological watershed of somewhere between eleven and twelve years. That’s when a child’s sponge-like open-mindedness begins to close down – as the child moves from being a child into adolescence and onward, God help them, into adulthood.

I have often lamented the fact that the vast majority of children will “grow up” to become “normal” adults. On one occasion, Jack (a fifteen-year-old) explained to me how some of his schoolmates were behaving badly, one or two of them had got into drugs and they had generally become not nice people (they were not his exact words!). Jack concluded, however, “I can’t wait to be an adult because, I assume, that when people become adults all that bad behaviour stops!” Ouch! I had to tell him that that was simply not the case.

In general, so-called “normal” adults simply do not know how to behave themselves – it’s not a conscious evaluation of what “behave” means, because years of psychological work has concluded that normal people are incapable of conscious evaluation – they live unconsciously, ceding all responsibility for their behaviour to their automatic subconscious. In effect this means that open-minded children develop into normal, mindless, automatic adults.

Is it possible that we can actually call that “development”? Indeed, what does the whole concept of “Personal Development” actually mean?

Personal Development is big business – just Google the phrase and you’ll find out how big! Personal Development accounts for a growing market sector in the traditional publishing industry as so-called self-help and popular psychology books abound. And, yet, the fact of the matter is that, at this very moment in time, there are far more mindless people on this planet than at any time in this planet’s history. Research indicates that the rise of this mindlessness went hand-in-hand with the rise of the nation state – starting with the rise of the Sumarian empire some 3,500 years ago. And, in the intervening period, the tribal way of life – where everyone looked after everyone else – has gradually died out.

As a result, modern “developed” society is one where mindlessness is the norm – that’s why “normal” people can be best described as “normal”. It is a derogatory term – because seven

decades of psychological work concludes that normal people are mindless and mad. They invest just about 1% of their energy in doing what they're supposed to be doing. Their subconscious minds live in the past – but because it's subconscious, they're not even aware of it. It's horrible – and we can see the results every day in the way people treat each other at home, at work and on the international stage.

So why would any child submit to the idea of becoming a normal adult? Is it not normal adults that squeeze the capacity for abnormal unlimited abundance out of our children. After all, it's perfectly feasible for a seven-year-old to believe that she can be a famous actress or singer, that he can be a world-class footballer, or that they can be astronauts – until parents, teachers and the whole system conspires to try to drag those “unrealistic” dreams back to reality.

So, back to the key question – does anyone need “personal development”? Or should we, as normal adults, be talking about un-developing ourselves? Our children (who will, if nothing changes, inevitably grow into normal adults) have their view of the world the right way around. They experience the moment – the much vaunted “Now” that great minds from the Buddha and Jesus Christ to Tony de Mello and Eckhart Tolle have talked about. Young children are generally not pre-occupied with worry and they do not live in the past. Contrast this with the normal adult whose subconscious is buried in the past, whose conscious is dancing around to the distractive music of constant useless thought – often worrying about the future.

Have you children? Do you want to squeeze the life out of them – an inevitability of mindless normal adult behaviour? You were once a child – how about becoming childlike again? Is it not the case that the normal adult needs some personal un-development? Do we not need to strip away the nonsense that our past-focused subconscious minds impose upon our “life” in the present moment? Should children should be teaching adults – not the other way around?

Humanistic psychologists – those working on the psychology of happiness (and we all yearn for happiness) have long been of the view that adults need to “unlearn”. We don't need to learn anything new – it is in our nature to be happy, content and focused in the joy of experiencing the here and now. And it is in the here and now that you will truly find peace of mind. Wouldn't you like that? Wouldn't you like to be effortlessly happy and successful?

The journey starts here. All you have to do is become, once again, childlike. All you have to do is experience the present moment (with no focus on the past or worry about the future). All you have to do is come to your senses. You have five of them – use them.