

That Nagging Fear: ‘What Will Those Other People Say?’

T HIS PHRASE is a giant impediment to our growth and freedom. When we get consumed by what impressions we leave on people, we forget to live for ourselves.

We avoid connecting to one of the most vital questions: what do I want to say?

Why do we care so much about proving ourselves to people?

Our world revolves around our relatives, colleagues, and friends. Their feedback is important to us, as we wish to live an inclusive life in our society.

Any negative feedback triggers our primal fear of rejection. This validation-seeking phenomenon and trying to please others has made us into mini pressure cookers. We are steaming away, desiring approval, admiration, and acceptance.

Humans are social animals, and each one is born unique. We started living in tribes to be inclusive and supportive of one another, so no one felt lonely.

But in the world today, we have taken this to a whole different level. Instead of supporting one another, we are living in fear of being left out, mocked, and hurt. To protect ourselves from isolation, we are fighting to prove our competence to others.

We are on a permanent ‘Fight or



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Flight mode.’ This term defined a hunter’s instinct when confronted by an animal in olden times. The hunter would either fight or flee.

Unfortunately, it has become a way of modern living because we feel permanently threatened and under attack by others.

If we do not defend ourselves, we think we will get eaten up. We are constantly strategizing on how to keep our defence guard by protecting ourselves from “what will people say”?

Let us flip the coin and see what happens instead, when we start focusing on what we want to say that makes us happy?

In the beginning, it all sounds strange and selfish. That is how we have been trained. Prioritize others’ needs over your own.

However, even airlines recommend using the oxygen mask first on yourself before helping others. So why can’t we fly high on our life journey by prioritizing wearing our oxygen masks before providing them for others?

We are all born unique and are meant to shine in our uniqueness. This uniqueness makes us stand out. Isn’t that our purpose of living; to explore and express ourselves?

When we do that, we do not need others to approve or acknowledge us and give us attention.

However, we are fearful to stand out because it requires confidence, clarity, and courage. We need to take responsibility for our voice and actions.

It indeed appears a daunting task, so we conveniently try to mingle with others and follow their rules. We focus on others and desperately desire that they treat us special and help us stand out.

Instead of trying to prove ourselves to others, we need to work on how to improve ourselves.

Once we commit to being our own faithful friends, there will be no need to worry about, “What will other people say!” **BW**

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