

Doing and Being

“Everything that every individual has ever done in all of human history and pre-history establishes the minimum boundary of the possible. The maximum, if any, is completely unknown.” The Adapted Mind -Tooby & Cosmides.

Eric Berne of Transactional Analysis fame introduced us to the concept of ‘Im OK and Your OK’ as being ‘the’ healthy mind state.

Underpinning this philosophy is the ability to differentiate Doing from Being. In other words someone can do things we are unhappy about, but fundamentally they are OK as a being/ as a person. Someone loves them, they have a family somewhere, they have a value system; and after all who are we to judge. Are we so perfect that others always walk in our shadow, or do we have faults too?

Most people in western cultures judge their self-worth by what they do. Consequently we judge others by understanding what others do. Society unconsciously places great importance on *doing* rather than *being*.

If you need references for obtaining a passport, or other institutional proof of identity, we are directed to a clergyman, solicitor, judge, or some other such role in life to verify our credentials. Thus what people ‘do’ is ingrained in our social value system.

Ex-military men often refer years later to a rank they once held – Major so and so, or Wing Commander so and so. When being introduced we often enquire a persons name and who they work for followed up by what do they do for a living, thus making an assessment of there value or of the pecking order within society assessed against ourselves.

Doing therefore becomes key to our whole persona, how we feel about ourselves, and how we portray ourselves to others. “Oh I am so busy at work” is a typical description that others can relate to, they also are busy, and of course you should be busy. Try saying “they pay me to do nothing and work” and see what sort of reaction you get back – you would be deemed lazy at best. Consequently, doing and having lots to do is acceptable.

‘Being’ however, commands less attention within society. Accepting ourselves for what we are and who we are is less ingrained within our social vocabulary. But the reality is it is who we are that enables us to ‘do’ what we ‘do’.

Eric Hoffer wrote, “We are warned not to waste time, but we are brought up to waste our lives.” This is evident in the tragedy of many people who in the first half of their lives spend their health looking for wealth, and in the last half spend their wealth looking for health.

“ Being comfortable in their own skin”, is a good description of someone who accepts themselves warts and all for who they really are. Finding out who you really are is not

that difficult, there are lots of psychology instruments that are designed to brand us, analyse us, and tell us how imperfect we are. But in the main we really know who we are, we just spend a lot of time managing impressions and providing an identity we think will fit the situation or what we feel will be acceptable.

If what you are doing will not last an eternity- can it be that important?

Accepting the 'self' is the key to balancing 'doing and being'. If we keep doing and forgetting the importance of 'being' we run out of time and become a retired.....whatever, thus returning to our life as a 'once upon a time doer'.

'Doing' does not necessarily equal productivity. 'Being' however, is productive in your relationships and your effectiveness with others, assuming that is that you live in world with others?