

The Needs Which Change and the Needs Which Don't

My feet... want to dance in the sun
My head... wants to rest in the shade
The Lord... says go out and have fun
But the landlord says "your rent ain't paid"

"Necessity" -- Finians's Rainbow

When I was asked to write about how our needs change as we move through life, I thought to myself "nothing simpler". I've had lots of careers in my life, vet, scientist, ballet teacher, choreographer, university teacher, pathologist, learning technologist, instructional designer and most recently, counsellor, mentor and therapist. Surely my needs must have changed and it would be a simple task to track them.

Same needs

However, when I started to reflect on what had gone on, it seemed to me that my needs hadn't changed at all. I have always (as I now realise), had a need for involvement both at a cerebral level and a heart level. I worked out much later on that my life works best when these two threads are in balance -- without this balance I become obsessed, workaholic and crazy. Looking back, apart from this balance, it seemed at this level that my needs have always been much the same. Involvement with teaching (I have been a teacher in most of these careers), the transmission of knowledge and above all sharing my inspiration with others seems to have been present as early as I can remember. My love of nature, of animals, of music and of the creative process has been there most of the time. My 'purpose' discovered on a Samurai purpose day back in 1983 was to "use my passion and knowledge through teaching and communication to help people grow". Later it shortened to "helping people get bigger". Eighteen years later it is "participating in growth -- mine and others" -- it hasn't changed that much.

Different needs

Then my reflection dropped another level. And I realised that a lot of my early activities had been hijacked by a number of unconscious needs. I remember sitting one day at breakfast at a ballet school in West Wales wishing to myself that the day was over. 'How can this be', I thought, 'I do this voluntarily, don't get paid much for it and find it inspirational.' And it began to dawn on me that not only was I doing the work out of a love of music and dance and sharing but also out of a challenge to my fearful self that I could do this very frightening and seemingly impossible thing ("A vet teaching ballet -- you must be kidding!"). Later on, I began to realise that much of what I did was not just inspired by a love of doing it but by my need to impress (and therefore hopefully to be loved by) everyone. And ultimately to impress parents whose need to train me to fit their model of reality had made them lose sight of my basic need which, as with all of us, was to be seen for who I really was and for unconditional love.

When my conscious personal journey started with the Mastery back in 1982, something in me woke up. It started me on a journey towards awareness and ultimately authenticity which is still not over today. What I began to realise is that some of my *early wounding* (particularly the thread of fear which has influenced much of my life -- my mother was pregnant with me in the London bombing in 1942/3 and I was literally soaked in her fear) and some of my *early conditioning* had created another set of needs which were shadowy and needed checking out.

As I understand it, these needs have been created in order to cope with an environment in which I no longer live. While useful at the time they are now not necessarily ways in which I want to self express. In spite of this, they have had a considerable influence on how I've lived my life *and above all how I've experienced my life*. In their book "Work Abuse", Judith Wyatt and Chauncey Hare have coined the acronym CIMS. This stands for Childhood Individual Maintenance Strategies. They describe them as the ways in which we have unconsciously adapted ourselves in order to survive and fit into our family of origin and later into our culture. It seems to me that one facet of my spiritual journey has been to bring into awareness both sets of needs and drives. Those which stem from the unique human being that I am and those which arise from my adaptations to family and society. It seems to me to be really important to distinguish between these two. Both sets of needs have been proper and useful to me at various times in my life. Unfortunately, the survival needs which have been carried

into my adult life can, if still unconscious, run me, take my attention and warp my experience when they are (mostly) unnecessary.

Looking back, I would love to revisit my "dancing years" free of the need to impress and to overcome fear. I would love to revisit my university and teaching years secure in my sense of self and not feeling that I had to be there primarily because of the security of a steady income. I would love to revisit the time when I was head of a creative team that was changing the world of teaching and learning from a sense of the thrill of creativity and not the political struggle to protect their salaries from hostile attacks by a threatened and powerful university hierarchy. I have lost these potential experiences for ever. My unconscious needs can and do sabotage my experience and my self expression -- for at least as long as they are unconscious.

In conclusion, what I think I'm trying to say, is that there is more than one set of needs. One stems from the impact of our environment and the other stems from who we are as unique human beings. It just might be a good idea to develop an awareness of these needs. Then we can have choices about how we conduct our lives and above all how we experience them. The journey continues...

Reference

Work Abuse -- How to Recognise and Survive It. *Judith Wyatt and Chauncey Hare* 1997
Schenkman Books Inc -- ISBN 0-87047-109-0

Adrian Longstaffe September 2001
information@interactive-consultancies.co.uk