

Showing Up

Sue Self, LCSW

Why do I have such a hard time ‘showing up’ for myself sometimes? What about the time I bought something I didn’t really want, just to be nice? Or the time I accepted a bogus explanation from a customer service clerk when I knew better? Or the times I said yes, simply by not saying no?

I show up for other people, I think, more often than I show up for myself. What is that about?

The reasons are complicated, but ‘why?’ is less important than ‘what now?’. Once you know something about yourself, you can’t not know it anymore. Can’t blame your parents now; you gotta own it.

So, knowing it and owning it are hard enough. I know that not showing up for myself is a disservice - and not just to myself. I teach people around me that they can treat me in certain ways, I show my family a poor example, too. And the person who roped me into something because I couldn’t say no, doesn’t get the authentic me. They don’t get from me what I would hope for from them: sincerity and honesty.

Owning it is even harder. People don’t ‘rope’ me into things. They don’t ‘make’ me feel guilty for saying no. They don’t ‘cheat’ me out of good customer service. I do all of those things to myself, by wanting to be liked, by not wanting to hurt feelings, by avoiding conflict.

So now what? I have to be mindful. I have to practice awareness. I need to take a moment to check out how I feel about what is happening to me right then, in the moment.

What do I have the urge to do when my friend invites me to go fishing? (I hate to fish!) Here are the options:

- I want to agree to go, already dreading it, but telling myself I want to spend the time with her.
- I could say I’m busy, when I’m really not, and search for something to do, so I’m not really lying.
- Or, moving along the line of authenticity, I can stop, do a check and be aware that I am saying yes when the truer answer is no. Know it.

I can speak my truth: “I hate to fish.”

I can give her a bit more of myself: “I want to spend the time with you, but I don’t like fishing. Can we do something else?”

Even more of me would be more authentic: "My first thinking was to say, yes, because I'm always afraid of hurting people's feelings. But that's the old me. I'm trying to be more honest, I don't really want to go. Fishing is not my thing. I want to hang out with you, and would rather enjoy your company over breakfast. Can we do that, instead?"

Own it.

Owning it means I need to trust that my honesty with myself will not diminish me, but inspire me to move forward. It also means that I need to trust that when I speak my own truth with love and respect, I'm not being hurtful.

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