

## Living Authentically

What is an authentic life? Authentic means real or genuine; not copied or false. In the context of living an authentic life we also consider alignment with our life purpose. So an authentic life means one that is genuine for the person living it, that is true to them and their life purpose, not a copy of someone else's life, or a life built around other people's expectations. It also means living consistently with our values at all times.

To be honest most of us are probably not leading entirely authentic lives. Most of us have some aspects of our lives where we are doing what others expect of us, or doing things we've observed others doing them rather than looking within ourselves and finding our own path. We have days when tiredness or stress causes us to act in ways that aren't consistent with our values, for example being rude or impatient. Aspects of our life that are not authentic may not even be conscious – we may not actually realise that we're making particular choices because of external influences rather than based on our own internal wisdom. This can be in relation to our careers, choices in relation to material possessions such as cars and houses and it can even be in relation to personal choices such as whether or not we have children.

It takes courage to be authentic, but the more authentic we are the more authentic people and experiences we attract into our lives. Being authentic often means going against others expectations which can cause tension and strain in relationships with friends and family. It also frequently means making significant changes to your life, which can be difficult emotionally, physically and/or financially. Before these challenges can even begin comes the challenging task of identifying your true purpose and values. For some tips and techniques to assist with identifying your purpose refer to our article *Know Yourself and Your Mission*.

Once you have a clear vision of your true purpose and your values you can examine your life and identify any aspects that are not currently aligned to those. You can then consider what changes you need to make in order to be living authentically. Actually making the changes is likely to be a complex process and is not something you should expect to achieve overnight. Depending on how many aspects of your life you identify as requiring change it may not be possible to address them all at once. It requires patience and perseverance but the rewards are well worth the work.

When we become authentic we open ourselves up to new levels of joy and fulfilment. Our new authentic behaviours will attract the things we seek into our lives. If we seek joy when we live authentically we will be joy and thus joy will be attracted into our lives.

You may meet resistance from family and friends to the changes you are making – again patience and perseverance is the key. As your family and friends see the positive changes in you such as your increased joy they will most likely become more accepting and may even be inspired to make changes themselves! Others will continue to be negative and disparaging, often because their lives are far from authentic and they are challenged by seeing you have the courage to do what they did not. In time you will have to decide whether you want to keep such people in your life. Is it authentic to do so?