

Let Your Light Shine

by Nicola Kimpton

One of the keys to living a life of joy and fulfilment is to 'be ourselves'. Being ourselves means learning to express and be happy with who we really are, rather than who society expects us to be. Embracing our true selves brings us pleasure and can transform our personal and professional lives in wonderful ways as we open up to our individuality and unique gifts. Yet it can feel daunting if we don't know where to start.

10 ways to let the real you shine:

1. Stop comparing yourself.

The first step is to stop comparing yourself to others. Everyone is different and measuring yourself against others distorts your thinking and can make you lose track of your own truth and priorities. Instead, focus on the one person that counts – you.

2. Discover who you are.

Any time you feel disconnected or you need clarification about your true self, try using visualisation. Find a quiet place and sit with your eyes closed. Relax and slow your breathing. In your mind's eye, imagine yourself energised and happy. What are you doing? Where are you? Are you with others or alone? Exploring what makes you feel happy in your mind can help you to turn your dreams into reality.

3. Identify your values and priorities.

Another great way to get in touch with your true self is to identify what's important to you. What skills or traits do you admire in yourself or others? Make a list of them (e.g. love, honesty, integrity, kindness, enthusiasm, creativity, humour). When you identify your core values, you can then begin to align your personal and professional life to reflect these priorities.

4. Love yourself.

Embrace your true self and don't worry about what other people think of you. It's what you think of yourself that counts. When you live your life according to your own priorities, you'll naturally feel better about yourself and have more confidence and joy to share with others. Of course, if a trusted friend or loved one offers advice, feel free to listen to their concerns – just remember to evaluate their opinions against your own intuitive guidance.

5. Dress to impress...yourself.

It would be boring if we all looked the same. Instead of trying to fit in with media ideals, dress in a way that makes you feel comfortable and special. Appearance is a form of creative expression and an opportunity to convey your true self. Have fun, but remember not to get too hung up on appearance, as it's what's on the inside that counts.

6. Indulge your passion.

Do what interests and pleases you. Whether that's swimming with dolphins or playing chess, indulge your passion and allow yourself to have fun without worrying about what other people think. By following your heart, you open the door to happiness and forming exciting new friendships with like-minded others.

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7. Celebrate your gifts.

What are you naturally gifted at? What unique skills and abilities do you bring to this planet? Perhaps you play music, write poetry, have an affinity with animals or are skilled with computers. Instead of hiding these gifts away, think about how you might use them to benefit others. By using and celebrating our unique gifts, we learn from and enhance each other.

8. Live your life your way.

From your living arrangements, to your choice of diet or friends, if you're living your life in a way that caters to other people's expectations rather than your own, you'll only feel resentful and frustrated. Instead, live your life according to your own values and dreams. As long as you're not hurting yourself or anyone else, it's important to follow your instinct as to what's right for you. Of course, if you feel guided to make healthy changes, it's also important to notice and follow this intuitive guidance.

9. Express yourself.

Speak up and express your true feelings. As long as you do so with compassion, friends and loved ones will appreciate your honesty. And don't be afraid to show your emotions. Give yourself permission to cry at soppy movies, laugh with friends and be enthusiastic about your passions. When you show people who you really are, you make a more genuine connection than if you try to be someone else to fit in.

10. Be accepting.

Learn to accept yourself and others for who they are. See the best in other people and you will see this attitude reflected back at you. Be proud of who you are and allow your true radiant self to shine through. As you celebrate and embrace your uniqueness, you teach others to do the same.