



Candace Pedicord, MS, coaches from the heart. As an interfaith minister, hypnotherapist and trauma therapist, her blending of spirituality, psychology and energy work creates a safe and vibrant space to heal lifelong issues of loss, neglect and abandonment. She is a Master Grief Coach and past life regressionist and enjoys using elements of EFT, EMDR and visualization in her work.

By Candace Pedicord

"When you shut down emotion, you're also affecting your immune system, your nervous system. So, the repression of emotion, which is a survival strategy, then becomes a source of physiological illness later on." Gabor Maté

You are a mother, manager, wife, sister, daughter. You have a job, you take care of a home, you raise a family, you care for your elderly parents, you support friends through divorce, illness and unexpected events. You've worked hard to be a caring spouse, a nurturing parent, a trusted friend.

As women, especially, we think we should be able to do it all. No matter the challenge, we rise to the occasion in our relationships, parenting, careers and financial responsibilities. But, over time, our systems become overwhelmed or depleted. Physical symptoms begin to appear. Back pain, headaches or digestive issues interfere with daily activities. As we transition into our different stages and paths, we may feel a lack of motivation or connection to our joy, a sense of exhaustion or frustration. So, we think positively, write in our gratitude journal, try harder to be better and happier. Yet it inevitably becomes clear that something is missing, a very important something that no amount of trying to be better, thinking positively or helping everyone around us can cure.

We are missing ourselves. Our authentic selves.

Here is what happened.

As an infant, toddler and child, we feel every emotion as a full body experience,

using not only our voice to laugh and cry and yell, but sometimes our bodies to hug, dance, sing, hit, turn away or hide. In a healthy and natural way, we express joy, sadness, anger and fear. We respond to life organically, without shame or guilt. We shift in response to life's experiences with fluidity and grace. Feeling emotions is transitory, and complete.

This is being authentic. Being present with ourselves, connected to our bodies and our emotions. Not afraid to be who we are.

Authenticity is an essential part of you. It has always been there. It was not taken from you or misplaced. But, in order to belong and fit in with your family and society, you've had to hide it, push it down, repress it, surrender it and ultimately lose contact with it.

When a child is faced with the choice of being authentic or staying attached to the family or tribe, it will choose attachment every time. It is, in the child's mind, a survival strategy. The authentic self slowly fades from view.

This may be why you are feeling somewhat lost and unmotivated, frustrated and unsure about who you are and what you want. You have created a life based on doing and being what you thought you had to be in order to survive.

Because the shutting down of healthy expression is an unconscious, full-body experiential adaptation of the nervous system, this childhood adaptation exists unconsciously into adulthood. For example, the message of "good children don't get angry"

Reclaiming Your Authentic Self

is interpreted by the child as "angry children are not loved". So, the child represses the anger, and you, as an adult, continue the adaptation, believing you cannot express strong emotion.

If we, as adults, continue to not respond to our authentic feelings of frustration, overwhelm or missing out on joyful experiences, we tend to revert to some common behaviors:

1. We place other people's needs before our own and have trouble saying no.
2. We feel duty bound and responsible for everything.
3. We consciously repress strong emotions like anger.
4. We believe that we are responsible for the emotional well-being of others.

And our bodies begin to give us messages that something is not quite right by creating physical imbalances, from chronic back pain to more serious illnesses like autoimmune disorders or cancers.

It is time to regroup.

Your new survival strategy, the one that will create a sustainable, trustworthy experience, is to engage with your own authenticity. You find your authenticity by noticing where you are *not* authentic. The authentic part of you, which has never left you, will notice the above behaviors and consciously choose differently to bring you back into balance emotionally and physically.

Pick your tribe. At this stage of your life, if you are surrounded by those who dismiss you, judge you, minimize you or abuse you, you've picked the wrong tribe. Surround yourself with people who are in sync with your values and principles. Establish genuine connections with friends and colleagues who are supportive and celebrate your growth and accomplishments.

Self-compassion is essential. Treat yourself with the same kindness and generosity that you

extend to others. Self-criticism and self-blame are your old survival tools, trying to live up to someone else's expectations. Authentic connection to self is about self-acceptance and self-love.

Be vulnerable. Choose to share your true thoughts, fears and hopes with trusted friends. You will find that, instead of the anticipated rejection, you are welcomed and appreciated, fostering deeper connections. And deeper connection is what you have longed for from the beginning.

Be curious. Why did you just say yes instead of no? Are you responsible for someone else's emotional response to your beautiful new boundaries? What would happen if you did get angry?

We are meant to enjoy our lives. Be creative. Spontaneous. Enthusiastic. Excited about life. Play full out. Live from a foundation of peace and confidence. Be *authentic*.



Spirited

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"Life does not happen to us, it happens for and through us. Transforming the energies of fear and loss into compassion and forgiveness is not only recommended, it is essential. The world needs beautiful, loving and strong women...now."