

Authenticity, Entry #1 of 2

We can be ourselves in the present moment without fear or apology, without the need for approval or justification (*Living Clean*, Chapter 7, "Awakenings").

Living in active addiction, many of us felt as though we were never free to be ourselves. We often needed to pretend to be someone we weren't to get what we wanted or needed, and it didn't take long before we were confused about who "ourselves" really were—if we ever had any idea in the first place. We were so accustomed to wearing masks that we didn't know what our own faces looked like anymore.

The atmosphere of acceptance and welcome we found in NA was a breath of fresh air for those of us who couldn't breathe freely for a long, long time. The Basic Text tells us, "The masks have to go," and we notice that when the masks come off, it's so much easier to breathe. For some of us, NA might be the very first place we have been where we suspected that we might be able to show our true selves to others. We may not feel that way in every meeting, or with everyone we know in NA, but little by little, we become much more comfortable showing who we really are.

The freedom to be ourselves flows directly out of the sense of security we develop by being welcomed and accepted in NA. Admitting that we were addicts was the first of many admissions; each time we show a bit more of who we truly are to our fellow members, we increase our sense of security and become free to learn even more about ourselves. We accept who we are and lose the need for approval from others. We no longer feel the need to justify our existence. The insecurity that defined so much of who we were in active addiction fades away, and we become who we were meant to be all along.

I will take off my mask and breathe more easily, knowing that others in NA will accept me for who I am.

Authenticity, Entry #2 of 2

Our willingness and humility show as a genuine desire to do better, no matter how well we are doing—not because we have something to prove, but because we care. (*Living Clean*, Chapter 6, “Work”).

Some members describe authenticity as “being our real selves in the real world.”

Addiction makes our worlds smaller. Our self-centeredness was so powerful that we found it harder and harder to show concern for what was going on around us. The Basic Text says, “We suffer from a disease that expresses itself in ways that are anti-social,” and many of us eventually found ourselves living lives that involved minimal interaction with others—especially anyone who wasn’t using.

In recovery, our connection to the world around us grows. No longer trapped by our obsession and compulsion to use drugs, and free from the fear of being exposed as addicts, most of us are able to pursue our genuine interests in ways we couldn’t before getting clean. We start to get involved in our own lives, in our families, and in our communities.

Whether we are exploring a new hobby, seeking out further education, or serving those around us through volunteer efforts, addicts in recovery find that we are able to follow our passions and our curiosities wherever they might lead us. As people who had been held hostage by the disease of addiction for so long, the newfound freedom to discover who we are and what we care about can lead us on unexpected journeys.

Being authentic is not just good for me—it’s good for the world around me. To connect with the world, I will begin by connecting with my own interests and passions.