



## ***The Most Powerful You is the Most Authentic You***

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During one phase in high school, I was a huge fan of a band called the Ramones. Aspiring for an equal amount of street glamour, I fashioned myself after them. I bought a leather biker jacket. I wore black Chuck Taylor All Star high-tops. I helped my jeans tear at the knees. I even learned to play power chords on my guitar. If I could perfect my New York punk image (as a teenager living in an upscale San Diego suburb), maybe I could win the same esteem. More importantly, I could conceal my vulnerability.

When we feel insecure, it's tempting to cloak ourselves in a manufactured image. We pretend to be someone we're not, someone we think is more socially stable. In too many cases, the person we hide is the most powerful person we can be.

We live at our best when we're most genuine. When we pursue our own goals and detach ourselves from how others try to shape us, we excel. This doesn't mean that to be authentic, you must no longer care what people think. It's about balance. One can adhere to social conventions such as dressing appropriately and having manners without sacrificing integrity. The goal is to show respect while honoring what you care about most in life.

Sometimes we take on the image of people we admire. It seems logical that if we behave as they do, we'll get the same results. Certainly there's a lot we can learn from people who've succeeded before us. But it's unreasonable to expect the identical outcome because each of us has a unique set of talents, values and circumstances. I can dress like Tom Cruise, cut my hair like Tom Cruise and even take acting classes. But no matter how hard I try, I will never be as good at being Tom Cruise as he is. And everything I do to make me more like him makes me less like me. I risk losing my identity.

In a recent workshop, someone asked me how to recognize your *true* self. It was a great question. We spend so much time trying to be what we should be, we lose track of who we actually *are*. Our true selves are tied to our values. What do you care about most in life? What things are so important to you, you'd wish them on others? The answers to these questions are your values. When you let your values be your soul motivation, you will be the real you.

Examine your lifestyle and identify where you put up a front. What are you trying to hide? What about you are you afraid to share? What do you do that's inconsistent with who you really are? Explore these questions and then try to re-align your lifestyle with your identity.

***The Most Powerful You is  
the Most Authentic You  
Page 2***

It feels vulnerable to show people the real you. You may also find it's liberating. No longer must you play a character. No longer will others dictate how your life should be lived. All you have to do is what comes naturally. Don't be surprised if people respond to you more positively than they ever have.

All of that time posing as the perfect punk never got me anything. I'll never be a Ramone. That was their truth. My truth was less cool, but just as powerful. When I finally took off the leather jacket, it became easier to make friends. I was free to do what fulfilled me, rather than what made me look good. Life started to click. Being me made me feel the way I always tried to, but never could as a fake Ramone.

I encourage you to let the real you out. The alternative is to be a weak version of someone else.

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