**Cultivating Authenticity**

The idea that we can choose authenticity makes most of us feel both hopeful and exhausted. We feel hopeful, because being real is something we value. Most of us are drawn to warm, down-to-earth, honest people, and we aspire to be like that in our own lives.

We feel exhausted, because without even giving it too much thought, most of us know that choosing authenticity in a culture that dictates everything from how much we’re supposed to weigh, to what our houses are supposed to look like, is a huge undertaking.

Given the magnitude of the task at hand, we are trying to be authentic in a culture that wants you to “fit in” and “people-please”.

Authenticity is the daily practice of letting go of who we think we’re supposed to be and embracing who we are.

* Choosing authenticity means:
* Cultivating the courage to be imperfect, to set boundaries, and to allow ourselves to be vulnerable.
* Exercising the compassion that comes from knowing that we are all made of strength and struggles.
* Nurturing the connection and sense of belonging that can only happen when we are being authentic. This involves the ability to be introspective and understand what motivates oneself.
* **Simply put, we have to believe that we are good enough, just the way we are**!

You can observe yourself objectively, (Pretend that you’re a fly on the wall or assessing someone else) and observe, which actions and choices feel authentic, and which do not.

Examine belief systems that you developed in childhood.

* What are characteristics of authentic people?
* They tend to take time to develop an opinion and speak their mind.
* They respond to internal expectations rather than external ones.
* They aren’t threatened by failure, and can admit their faults.
* They are often less judgmental of others, and have strong self-esteem.
* What are characteristics of inauthentic people?
* They tend to be defensive and self-deceptive.
* They are likely not being true to themselves.
* They are looking to others for approval and validation, being judgmental.
* They are not thinking things through.
* They are not learning from mistakes.
* They are unable to express emotions clearly or understand their own motivations.