

BEING YOU

LIVING ACCORDING TO THE EXPECTATIONS OF OTHERS CAN BE DRAINING, CONSTRICTIVE AND SELF-DEFEATING. BUT HOW DO YOU STEP OUT OF THE JUDGEMENT CYCLE AND START TO ACCESS YOUR AUTHENTIC SELF?

BY ELOISE KING

There is only one thing you were born into this world to do. When you hear what that one thing is, there's a good chance you'll appreciate it for its simplicity, you'll recognise its perfect logic and, for most, it will feel right in the depths of your core as well.

What is that one thing? You were born to be you.

Not the "you" your parents want you to be; not the "you" your partner or best friend think you should be; not the "you" that is like your neighbour; and certainly not the "you" that society favours. You were born to be you.

But a growing number of movers and shakers are feeling compelled to speak up in its defence. Why? Because the sad reality for many of us is that being our true selves without judgement each day is still one of the hardest things to embrace. Even those who are achieving goals deemed to be of great worth often meet with their harshest critic when the lights go down, when they're left alone with their thoughts.

The topic was explored recently at Soul Sessions, an ongoing series of intimate live and online wine, dine and wisdom events. Two pioneering thinkers on the subject matter, branding expert Richard Sauerman and Access Consciousness co-creator Dr Dain Heer, were invited to share why this topic is so hot right now and how people can get closer to the Holy Grail: living the life they were truly born to live.

BRAND YOU & THE RED WINE CONVERSATION

Have you ever considered that loose red wine midnight conversation to be the best measure of your true self? Probably not the morning after but Richard Sauerman, 51, branding expert and author of *Wake Up Tiger*, thinks there's magic in it for those of us wanting to dig deeper.

"The red wine conversation represents that moment with real friends and family, when you drop your guard and be who you are," Richard says. "You can be politically incorrect, socially unacceptable or show a really silly side of yourself. It's usually a more emotionally driven conversation and it puts people in the zone of what they really care about."

While it's not obvious yet, Sauerman is a tad foul-mouthed, brash but passionate, big-hearted and brilliant at applying his decades of big-branding experience to the topic of you, the real you — or what he calls Brand You.

Recalling memories of growing up in South Africa, he describes his childhood as constrained, culturally limiting, politically stifling, socially controlling and full of propaganda.

"I never knew what Nelson Mandela looked like because every book about him was banned," he says. "If I'd had a copy perchance, I would've been f-king arrested because it was illegal. That was the context in which I grew up and I always knew in my heart I was going to start my life when I got out of South Africa."

At 25 years of age, he left, and two years later had settled in Australia. While experiencing a freedom he'd never had before, he soon noticed less obvious types of constraints, invisible to the naked eye but still limiting us all from being free in our own skin.

THE PROBLEM: GLASS HOUSES

Richard says social and cultural norms have become the glass houses that contain and constrain us.

1 A rational world

People have two fundamental qualities — rational and emotional — but society favours rationalism almost every time. Using *Monopoly* as an analogy for life, Richard says, "It doesn't matter how you'll feel along the way because the current game doesn't cater for our emotions. So we're all living in our heads, disconnected from who we really are. We're out of balance, lacking harmony, always favouring hard over soft and disobeying the ancient principles of yin and yang. In a world dominated by rational goals and common sense, we have forgotten how to listen to our heart."

2 The Looking Good Game

"Everyone is out there playing the 'Looking Good Game', the unwritten rules of which state that you're not allowed to look like an idiot, be poor, ugly, have no friends, because all of those things are not looking good," Richard says. "But looking good is about trying to impress everyone else by doing what is considered to be socially acceptable. It comes with 'shoulds' and limitations that contain and constrain us." The most important agreement in life, however, is the one we make with self. "Whether that's 'I can' or 'I can't', 'I'm worth it' or 'I'm not' — these are where our attention should be because they can be the biggest limitations of all if left unchecked," Richard says.

3 Illusion of control

It's not just control freaks who feel like they need to be in control; it's most of us. While you can't control much of life anyway, the price you pay for trying too hard is no spontaneity and lack of ease, joy and fun. "There needs to be a balance between control and spontaneity so we can still feel alive while we are living," he says. "My brother's boyfriend's father saved everything he earned so he could retire comfortably at 65. A week later he died. What the f-k, mate? You didn't control that very well, eh?"

TOOLS FOR CHANGE: ACCESSING OUR AUTHENTIC SELVES

Applying his branding expertise to the topic of "brand you", Richard recommends people get crystal clear on their answers to the three questions below. "Once clear, you must turn it into practice in →

the same way you'd eat an elephant, one bite at a time," he says. "Start walking your talk."

Why do you do what you do?

It might be to shake things up, create a kinder world or help other people live a better life this time round. Answering this question helps you understand what your purpose for being is.

What are your strengths?

Your strengths provide insight into what you are really about. Write a list of things you're awesome at. Ask friends, colleagues or partners for help because we often don't see ourselves clearly. Be careful not to dismiss strengths you think are not so positive. "Ruthless, for example is determined, focused and able to make a stance," says Richard. "It's a real attitude word, someone you can count on to make things happen."

What's your promise to the world?

Once you've got your list of attributes, own them and be those things in the world. Write down 10 things you can do to be more self-expressed in a way that's aligned with your strengths. This will be different for everyone. "I'm really clear that I'm not here to make life comfortable, but I'm here to make it better. And more interesting," Richard says. One thing on Richard's list is talking to people in lifts. "In most office buildings, people have caught the lift together for 15 years and never said g'day because there is an unwritten rule about not talking to people in lifts. Well, no, f--k that; I say do it. Engage in a friendly way. If the person you're in the lift with has a problem with that, that's their problem."

BE YOURSELF, CHANGE THE WORLD

Dr Dain Heer, author of *Being You, Changing the World*, became fascinated with our inability to be happy just being ourselves after a long stint of depression back in 2000. He was a successful chiropractor to anyone looking in but, under the surface, deeply depressed and suicidal. He had put an end date on his life that he would follow through with if he couldn't find a better way to be himself in the world.

At the eleventh hour he discovered Access Consciousness, a system for opening doors to a different way of experiencing ourselves. It uses questioning techniques to reframe your perspective of reality and body awareness to create dynamic change. So impressed was he with the results he got using Access Consciousness, he has since been teaching it across the 37 countries it's now available in.

THE PROBLEM: JUDGEMENT IS OUR ENEMY

Dr Dain believes most of us stand in judgement of ourselves, and those around us, for most of our waking lives. "Judgement is a powerful, insidious habit that many of us do automatically, all day long, without even realising it," he says.

Our parents used judgement to teach us the difference between right and wrong, so it's little wonder this is the case. As adults, however, Dr Dain says it's time to rethink this habit as it no longer serves us. "Whether it is our judgement around sex, money or skin colour, it has a way of destroying everything in its path, including our potential, just so we can enforce the box we've put around ourselves," he says. "Forget trying to fit in to what others believe we should be. We all need to be rebellious adventurers who will change society into something better than what it currently is, just by getting rid of our judgement so we can truly be ourselves."

TOOLS FOR CHANGE: ACCESSING OUR AUTHENTIC SELVES

There are many Access Consciousness tools and techniques that help people connect people to their true being. Here are just a few:

1 What is true for you feels light

Access Consciousness teaches that our body has an intelligence of its own. Your body does not talk to you in words, but rather in feelings of light and heavy. What is true for you will always feel light; what is not for you will always feel heavy.

"It's important to remember that you are not your body," Dr Dain says. "You are all around it, you are in it and through it, but you are not your body. Your body has a consciousness of its own, desires of its own and you need to respect those by communicating with it. If you can tune in to your body's intelligence, it will tell you what it needs each day."

Dr Dain suggests asking your body what it wants to wear each morning. As you stand in front of the closet, your body will make you aware of a particular shirt or pair of pants with a feeling of lightness when you look at it or another item might flash across your mind before you've even seen it.

"The days that you listen are usually the days that people will comment how great you look in your outfit," Dr Dain says.

2 Who does it belong to?

Dr Dain estimates that 98 per cent of our thoughts and emotions don't actually belong to us. "We are picking them up like a big psychic radio receiver," he says. If you ask yourself, "Who does this belong to?", the stuff that isn't yours will start to dissolve and feel lighter. "What most of us do instead is start looking for why we feel sad or angry, so we look back over our day and find reasons to justify it," he says. "Then we just get more of the bad stuff."

3 How does it get any better than this?

Whenever something good happens or something bad happens, ask yourself the question: "How does it get any better than this?" It will improve a bad situation and make a good one even better.

"Most people are willing to ask this question in a bad situation because they want it to be better," says Dr Dain. "If you ask,

'How does it get better?' when things are already good, it will get better and you will get more of your goodness."

TRUE SELVES CREATE THE PERFECT WORLD

Sauerman believes that if we could all realise our true self potential, it wouldn't just change the world, it would transform it.

"If we could all just play to our strengths, people would be happier and less anxious," he says. "We'd all be less stressed, have better health, smile more, laugh more and, for me personally, that's what life is all about."

Dr Dain believes if we could all step out of judgement we would have a world within which we could see other possibilities for how to create government, run schools, distribute money, advance sustainable living and other amazing things.

"It may take a while for the general public to catch up, but imagine being able to wake up in a world where there was no separation between any of us — not based on sex, colour, country or economic status.

"Imagine a world in which we could all hold hands across the planet. That's what I see as possible if we all chose to come out of judgement of ourselves and each other so we all have permission to just be ourselves." ☺

Eloise King is a journalist and the founder of Soul Sessions, an organisation providing enlightening live and online events. See footage of both Richard Sauerman and Dr Dain Heer in the Soul Sessions video library at www.soulsessions.org.

Getty Images

Social and cultural norms have become the glass houses that contain and constrain us.