



## **THE DANGERS OF ADAPTATION AND COMPLACENCY**

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Once we are in midlife, we are better able to use the wisdom of our life experiences to identify healthy and unhealthy patterns of behavior. One of these patterns is adaptation. Adaptation is a process that is common to all of us on planet Earth. It is necessary for our survival, but is dysfunctional when we adapt to the point of complacency. When we are young, we adapt to our environment to fit in with our families, our friends and our surroundings. Adaptation helps us survive stressful situations. We adapt to aid our resilience and recovery from life experiences. This form of adaptation is familiar to all of us and is necessary for our survival.

We also adapt collectively. People in communist countries adapt to oppression. They learn how to behave under these circumstances for survival. The collective often 'normalizes' what it adapts to. This normalization is also a means for survival.

There are other kinds of collective adaptations that are not survival based and cost us our humanness. When new ideas are introduced into our society, we collectively adapt to them. Internet communication is an example of this. Communicating through Facebook began slowly, but due to our collective adaptation has become a common form of communication in our society. We have paid a price for this and we are all feeling it. Virtual relationships are not as meaningful as 'real' relationships. The human element is painfully absent. Internet communication lacks intimacy. This has had a significant impact on the emotional and mental health of our communities, especially our children. Today, children communicate with each other through the internet and text messaging rather than in the playground or through real conversations. This has contributed to sedentary lifestyles and obesity, a form of illness we have never before experienced among children in the history of the human race. Our society has normalized this. Although we feel the impact of these patterns on the health of our children, we have adapted and have little incentive for change as a society. Change takes work. In addition, our medical system does not promote prevention or education. It is willing to medicate children whose lifestyles are making them ill. This perpetuates complacency among both children and their parents. Moreover, adults and children alike spend hours a day in front of the television watching commercials where they are entrained to adapt to the illusions that corporate marketing perpetuates. This reinforces their complacency and 'group-think' mentality.

Another example of collective adaptation is our complacency around tolerating the dysfunction within organizations in our society. Our health care, legal, education, political and even our religious systems no longer operate from their core missions or visions. They have gone off course and function from fear, greed and power. We all feel this when we interact with them. When we adapt to their dysfunction by tolerating their lack of vision, we support their unethical and off-course modus. This perpetuates dysfunction in our society and we indirectly support the lack of ethical behavior and integrity within our systems through our collective complacency.

Some of my patients complain when I ask them to eat organic food and read food labels to make sure they are not putting chemicals in their body that may cause them harm. They have adapted to eating unhealthy foods that our food industry has introduced into the market contaminated with chemicals, pesticides, hormones and including genetic modifications. Even though the food they eat makes them sick, many times they are unwilling to put extra effort into eating consciously. Adaptation promotes complacency. Complacency promotes illness.

This is the point where adaptation becomes unhealthy. When we become complacent and resist when asked to bring consciousness to our choices, we have become part of the problem, not the solution. *The degree of consciousness that we shop with directly affects the state of our world.* It has a direct effect on our jobs, our economy and our health. If we buy cheap goods that are manufactured abroad to maximize corporate profit, we are not supporting our local and national economy. We are supporting the economic interests of the corporations whose primary interest is to maximize their profit margin at the cost of American jobs. If we buy genetically modified foods, not only are we investing in future illness, we are enabling a form of agriculture that is harmful to the natural world and environment. If we support large department stores that produce cheap goods through child labor, we are enabling these harmful practices.

If we adapt to what society normalizes, we become part of the dysfunction of our society. We must become conscious of how our choices affect our health and the health of our families and communities. We must *not* adapt to this degree.

If every person decided to become conscious of this dangerous and unhealthy pattern and began to make conscious choices, we could solve many of our collective problems quickly. Imagine living in a society of conscious people who cared about how their food was grown and supported only sustainable and healthy practices; they did not adapt to the normalized value system of society that lacked heart and meaning. If a critical mass of people began to choose consciously, we could shift our economy, our dysfunctional systems and the health of our country.

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