

The Tyranny of 'Should'

Adapted from: <http://www.primalwords.com/thoughts/thought011029.html>

What is 'should'? It is a word/symbol that we use to indicate an image in our minds of something other than what is.

Let's take a mundane example. The weather forecast says the skies should be clear. We get to the picnic, and it's cloudy. We say, "The sky should be blue!" We get upset at the weather reporters, and even at the sky itself for not being what it should be. This is crazy.

Let's look at what is. The sky is cloudy. That's what it is. There is nothing else to say about it. 'Cloudy' is what is happening, and no amount of thinking or complaining about what 'should' be, changes a very simple fact – the universe, and everything in it, is what it is. This isn't a theory. This isn't a belief system. This doesn't need research. It's right here. What is, is, and all our complains, projections, memories, regrets, wishes, and dreams are what they are – thoughts and images in our heads. And they cannot change what is.

Our heads are often full of 'should' that deny the reality of how we feel and what we are. We think, "I shouldn't feel this way." But we do feel this way. That is what we are and what is happening. Since our childhood, we have lived under a constant barrage of admonitions and coercion to be something other than what we are. "Stop slouching. Don't be so sad. You have no reason to cry. You shouldn't be hungry yet. You should grow up, and stop being so childish." What a colossal pile of mental cruelty. It's as ridiculous as harassing a duck for quacking, getting wet, eating grubs and having webbed feet. A duck is a duck. And I am what I am.

Now, as adults, we are confused and hurting because we have not been allowed to be what we are. The modern mantra, "What should I do?" makes us prey for the 'experts' and 'holy' men who say "I know what you need, and this is what you should do!" Even in the most apparently benevolent suggestions, kind-hearted developmental programs, and peaceful, spiritual practices, 'should' continues its tyranny. Whenever the message does not accept how you are, and suggests you should be different, your very self and freedom are in danger.

How do we free ourselves from the Tyranny of Should? By being what we are and feeling what we feel.

- You're angry, but you think you should be more compassionate. The truth? You feel angry.
- You're hurt, but you think you don't deserve to be upset because others have it worse. The truth? You feel hurt.
- You're depressed, but you think you shouldn't be crying so much. The truth? You feel sad.

- You don't know, but you think you should be able to figure it out. The truth? You feel confused.

I'm not saying it's easy. If you haven't practiced open, honest expression for years, you'll be rusty and it can be frightening and challenging. But what is your option? To continue the false act of 'should' while you continue to hide what you feel anyway? With support, if we can stay with our feelings as they are, no matter how apparently painful and loathsome, their expression will lead to a gradual, healthy change that follows our nature. By accepting the way we are without trying to change, we allow change to happen!

Break free of the Tyranny of Should. Feel what you feel and be what you are.

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