

What's Behind Your Mask: Hope or Fear?

by Dede Lyons



As we transition into post pandemic life the mask or no mask question is stirring up a lot of fear. A worry that is very warranted since these guards have somewhat protected us for the past fifteen months.

Hopefully as we begin to remove these tangible masks we will get the courage to take a serious look at our emotional masks. These are the disguises we wear that block our authentic selves and can prevent us from being happy and reaching our highest potential.

It's expected that us pandemic-weary Americans are looking for some sense of normalcy and craving safe concrete masking rules to follow. However even the CDC guidelines for the country are just that, guidelines that include many variables. If you are fully vaccinated you are safer than the unvaccinated. But if you are vaccinated with an underlying health condition or are unvaccinated you'll have to be extra careful and keep wearing your mask. Plus you'll need to get comfortable with the honor system that's evolving. Hardly anyone, where unmasking is encouraged if vaccinated, (with the exception of airlines, some public transportation and health care settings), will be checking your proof of vaccination documents. This trust your neighbor system will vary by state, and it's a bit anxiety provoking.

Yes more uncertainty! We have become accustomed to the uneasiness that has permeated our everyday living and learned how to manage it. During this year and a half of isolation we have discovered how to cope and even thrive with unpredictability. We have dug down deep into our souls and mustered up courage, hope, and resilience we didn't know we had prior to the Covid-19 outbreak.

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tjconner@cblpa.com

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“When experience matters”

Some of us have suffered big losses and illnesses, but we have also gained insights and opened our eyes and hearts to feel how precious life truly is. The isolation has slowed us down and allowed us to reflect on ourselves and our lives and discover what brings us joy. We see how mother nature needs our protection, while she comforts and grounds us.

So as this re-entry anxiety continues I'm aware of the emotional guises I wear or have worn. My concealed insecure feelings are the ones that need the most attention and releasing since they suppress my genuine, courageous and trusting self. The traits that I exactly need to brave out this next unpredictable phase.

My two go-to disguises: the overachiever and the people pleaser, display themselves as pretending everything is fine when it's not. My unconscious pretending behavior initially seemed to be working in my favor and later it was apparent it was negatively impacting me. I learned in therapy, in my early thirties, that I was unable to trust and form intimate relationships.

Now when I see these old guises rearing their ugly heads I get in touch with my fearful feelings, journal, share and express them till they subside and I say, “bye bye” for now. Since I know these fake masks may try to return when I'm feeling vulnerable.

I protect myself by following my FGE guidelines; practicing my heart-centered tools: giving and receiving love, journaling, staying present and reciting my gratitude list. These routines give me confidence to believe in myself, have blind faith and trust my angels are nearby.

As you gradually step into the “Reopening of America” why not allow your lovable authentic self to be seen, the one that feels hope, love, joy and courage...always intending the best is yet to come!

*For more information on the
Feel Good Express,
please email Dede at
dede@feelgoodexpress.com
or visit her website at
www.feelgoodexpress.com.*