

## Becoming Yourself

The flowers were bought, the menu was selected, guests had been invited. The day was fast approaching, it would alter the course of my life forever. But the path did not feel joyous or purposeful. It felt like a turn down an alley off a street I had never seen before. And I did not like where I was and certainly did not know how I got here. That was when I called off the wedding.

After entering the engagement with smiles and hugs there were now so many concerns. Who was I anymore? The face in the mirror did not look familiar. It was a stranger, a face distorted and broken. When thinking about the big day, the wrong emotions fluttered to the top; dread, suffocating, and inauthentic. My family patiently pointed out and reiterated, I was not myself and now I knew they were right.

It was the hardest thing I have ever done and the thing I am most certain was the right thing to do. Years of a hostile and negative relationship had forced me to slowly hide and protect everything about myself. What food I wanted to eat, where to live, how to spend free time – all now subject to harsh scrutiny and opinion. To keep the peace, to keep feeling loved, I slowly became completely inauthentic. I was a complete fabrication, consisting solely of my morphed sense of self seeking to be loved.

It was not love though, not at all. It was contingent on my docile agreement and subservient attitude. She did not love me for me, she loved who she wanted me to be. I could not keep being this other person, some made up version of who I truly was, and I could not keep letting her love that person who never really existed. It was going to hurt both of us, but unless I hid myself forever my true spirit was going to come out. I needed to live my authentic self.

Calling her into the living room, I told her it was over. It was not a complicated discussion, not long and drawn out like in the movies. She took me at my word, verified I was serious, and then walked out the door like it was a business meeting gone sour.

We have never spoken since then. I am not sure what she has ended up doing with her life now that ten years has gone by. Did she find the love of her life and start a beautiful family like I did? Does she have all the things she wants in life like I do? Through my strength and courage, I at least gave her a chance at a life to find those things because they were things I could not offer. At least the real me could not offer. The fake me maybe could have, for a while, but neither of us would have been happy.

To be loved is one of life's great feelings but the feeling evaporates quickly when you are not yourself, when you are inauthentic. Because it is not really you that is loved, but the oddly assembled accumulation of deceptions you have perpetuated.

The short-term pain, long explanations to friends and family were all worth it a million times over to me because the long-term direction, happiness, and success of my life, my authentic life, are everything I dreamed of when I made that difficult decision ten years ago.