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Wholehearted Living: Cultivating Creativity and Letting Go of Comparisons

Psalm 139:13-14 (CEV)

Galatians 6:4-5 (CEV, The Message)

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Today, our focus in helping us all live a wholehearted life is on cultivating creativity and letting go of comparisons. So, let's begin.

Social worker and researcher Brene Brown reflects on creativity by comparing two homes she lived in as a child and the two schools she attended. She said their home in New Orleans with covered with art work, her Mom created marvelous cuisine, and she sewed all their clothes including mother, daughter, and baby doll matching sets.

Then, her parents moved the family to Houston, where she describes their new home that looked a lot like everyone else's home, no homemade artwork, big stuffy matching couches, glass coffee tables which she thought looked more like a lobby Howard Johnson or Holiday Inn lobby to her than a home.

In New Orleans she went to Catholic school where everyone dressed the same, said the same exact prayer, all looked the same, and all marched to the tune of the same drummer.

In Houston, she went to public school where there were no more uniforms, In this new school, cute clothes counted. No homemade clothes would do, only clothes from "the mall".

For Brene Brown, here life story went from creativity to the stifling combination of fitting in and being better than via

comparison, which is always about conformity and competition.

So, we have Brene Brown's story and in it we may see elements of our own story too!

Let's dig into creativity for a few moments.

- Some view creating for the sake of creating as self-indulgent at best and flaky at worst. And yet, it is not. Because, it is necessary if the world to survive much less thrive, and it is necessary for us as individuals, if we are to survive as well.
- Creativity is the power to connect the seemingly unconnected
- The only unique contribution that we will ever make in this world will be born of our creativity.
- There is no such thing as creative and non-creative people. There are only people who use their creativity and people who don't.
- If we want to make meaning, we need to create.
- Creativity is the expression of our originality, what we bring to the world is completely original and cannot be compared. And so then, words such as ahead or behind or best or worst lose their meaning.
- Creativity is not a luxury or something we do in our spare time – if looked at as so, it will never be cultivated.

Now, let's talk about comparisons and why we need to let go of them, if we are to cultivate creativity.

When it comes to comparisons there is an infinite number of categories upon which we can compare ourselves and an almost infinite number of people to compare ourselves to. Once we begin down that road, we never find an end.

Comparisons make us feel insecure, envious and discontented with our life. Not exactly, what we want, right? Theodore Roosevelt said, "Comparison is the thief of joy." Comparisons to others can steal our joy and when we provoke comparison we steal the joy of others.

Not sure whether you compare yourself to others. Then, how about exploring that a bit further by asking yourself who you have compared yourself to in the last 24 hours, or try this – the last time you checked your Facebook or Instagram feed, which updates made you feel envious, made you feel as if your life paled in comparison? In turn, did some posts make you feel smug or better than that person?

Regarding scrolling through social media posts, research has shown that time on social media feeds increases depression and envy and decreases well-being. Thus, maybe it would be best for all of us to use social media purposely, specifically choosing what we look at and keeping it to a relative minimum.

The habit of making comparison has numerous shortcomings.

- Comparisons are always unfair. We typically compare the worst we know of ourselves to the best we presume about others
- Comparisons put focus on the wrong person. You can control one life – yours. But when we constantly compare ourselves to others, we waste precious energy focusing on other people's lives rather than our own.
- Comparisons often result in resentment. Resentment towards others and towards ourselves.
- Comparisons deprive us of joy. They add no value, meaning, or fulfillment to our lives. They only distract from it.

- Letting go of comparison is not a to-do list item. Rather it requires constant awareness.

“God is the one who put me together inside my mother’s body, And I praise God because of the wonderful way God created me. Everything God does I marvel at! Of this I have no doubt.” (Psalm 139:13-14 CEV)

“Do your own work well, and then you will have something to be proud of. But don’t compare yourself with others. We each must carry our own load.” (Galatian 6:4-5 CEV)

“Make a careful exploration of who you are and the work you have been given, and then sink yourself into that... Don’t compare yourself with others. Each of you must take responsibility for doing the creative best you can with your own life.” (Galatians 6:4-5 The Message)

Amen and Amen.