

Emotional Authenticity
By Saida Désilets, Ph.D

“People who are not present do not have a sense of inner strength.”¹

“The same power we use to shut ourselves down, we can use to open ourselves up. Your whole life will be changed if you give yourself permission to be UNHAPPY.”²

“Conformity exists as a concept wherein if we buy into it or not, creates the opportunity to understand how comfortable we are with ourselves within any circumstance.”³

Modern society specializes in a myriad of great intellectual and conceptual developments, however, few studies are given to the development of the individual. The most important study to undertake is the study of ourselves; how we operate, why we do what we do, what and how we can change to grow into our full potential. How does the Inner Strength seminar serve the individual to attain emotional maturity and authenticity? What are the inner strength pillars and what role do they serve in the development of emotional authenticity? How does a person with inner strength function in the world and why would this be an efficient way to be? Is this inner strength available to everyone and if so, how?

¹ Quote from Bears Kaufman, Option Institute, July 2005

² Quote from Bears Kaufman, Option Institute, July 2005

³ Notes from Inner strength seminar, Option Institute, July 2005

How does the Inner Strength seminar serve the individual to attain emotional maturity and authenticity? The Inner Strength seminar introduces the constructs of inner strength in such a manner to invite individuals to personalize it for themselves. This construct includes: 1) Impregnability – not easily bent, broken or injured, yet totally flexible, 2) Durability – maintaining internal power, robust, and vigor during stress and strain, 3) Steadfastness – ability to maintain ideas firmly in the face of opposition, 4) Action capacity – designing self from the inside, creating potential to express the inner framework, and 5) Maintain/sustain – pillars of inner strength or inner continuity from this moment forth.⁴ These constructs act like an inner compass and moves individuals from feeling externally influenced to being autonomous (self-referencing) and authentic (self-honesty). Learning these constructs enabled me to have a new frame of reference on which to recreate myself in such a way that I could exercise my full potential and become a ‘force of nature’.

What are the inner strength pillars and what role do they serve in the development of emotional authenticity? There are ten pillars of inner strength, they are: 1) Love first, act second, 2) Clear intention, 3) Be present, 4) Be authentic, 5) Nonjudgmental, 6) Let go of the outcome, 7) Ability to explain ourselves to ourselves, 8) Be passionate, 9) See opportunities in every situation,

⁴ Quote from Bears Kaufman, Option Institute, July 2005

and 10) Own our choices.⁵ These pillars were developed by group consensus as to what would be the most powerful reminders that cultivate inner strength. Using any of these pillars would serve to remind the individual to internally reference and live according to their inner guidance. Commitment, or the ability to take an 'attitudinal' stance (yes or no, instead of may be), is a key part of developing inner strength, hence accessing more emotional authenticity. In a class I was asked to stand in front of the room while the entire group gave me negative feedback about their perceptions of me. Using the pillars, I was able to access my own inner knowing that 'I am enough'⁶ and that 'no body knows more about me than me'⁷ This allowed me to receive the feedback with an open heart and mind, and exercised the choice to learn instead of defending myself.

"Beliefs come and go, yet we are always here. What do I choose to believe now and how is this useful for me?"⁸ The use of the pillars brings to light the importance of understanding the transient nature of our beliefs. Practicing inner strength requires the ability to question our beliefs and to realize those beliefs continue to evolve as we evolve. We had a class in which we were blindfolded in an outdoor setting and asked to "do what you know to do".⁹ Here we were left, with no instruction and guidance, to access how we are in the world when we are graphically exposed to unknown circumstance. Many found this exercise

⁵ Handouts from Inner strength seminar, Option Institute, July 2005

⁶ Quote from Bears Kaufman, Option Institute, July 2005

⁷ Quote from Bears Kaufman, Option Institute, July 2005

⁸ Quote from Clyde, Option Institute, July 2005

⁹ Quote from Leah, Option Institute, July 2005

frightening and disturbing, moving away from people to avoid possible injury. However, I found this exercise profoundly revealing of my ability to be completely comfortable alone as well as totally willing and able to connect with others in a playful way. This demonstrated to me my ability to adapt and relax within stressful stimuli. It was a wonderful test of emotional stability and maturity within the group.

How does a person with inner strength function in the world and why would this be an efficient way to be? "...to build an internal frame work to support our greatness and build our pillars of inner strength requires deep self-study."¹⁰ A person with inner strength is also a student their own nature, using awareness of what they are thinking, feeling and doing, owning these things, accepting them, understanding them, and thus being able to change them. This ability to know oneself empowers a depth of emotional authenticity to develop. Having access to how we work as a mechanism of thought, emotion and sensation enables us to be far more efficient in the world as we are no longer servant to our habits and reactions. We are also able to represent ourselves more honestly and openly, which lends us to have more passion and happiness to share with those around us. I came to a beautiful understanding that no matter what happens in my life, I am enough. By having this new belief, I am able to be more free and authentic in sharing of myself in the world.

¹⁰ Quote from Bears Kaufman, Option Institute, July 2005

“Wisdom has nothing to do with time spent on the planet, but with the quality in which we live our life.”¹¹ Cultivating emotional authenticity through inner strength also reveals the quality of wisdom for that individual. Wisdom grows with the depth of our self-studentship. Therefore, a method of growing wisdom is living from the standpoint in which we study ourselves and act according to our inner compass. There are few people in the world with these qualities, therefore those who choose to live by this method would be setting a powerful living example of emotional maturity and authenticity. There was a beautiful exercise where we had to walk around and tell people negative things about them. This showed me that criticism and critical thinking are everywhere and have little impact except the one I assign to it. I also understood that I honestly do not know anything about anyone, therefore I am free to explore people by asking more questions rather than making assumptions.

“It is so beautiful how people want others to conform to their standards of how they believe people should behave.”¹² Another efficient use of inner strength in the world is the understanding of what is perceived as ‘group pressure’ to conform. Every group, ethnicity, religion, business, etc. has a certain subset of standard behavior they expect. When a person develops their ability to be self-referencing and authentic, they can witness these behavioral patterns and choose for themselves whether or not they wish to conform. There is a recognition that ‘group pressure’ is an illusion in which the individual freely

¹¹ Quote from Bears Kaufman, Option Institute, July 2005

¹² Notes taken from lecture with Bears Kaufman, Option Institute, July 2005

chooses to adopt or not. Inner strength then allows for individuals to function independent of circumstance, aligned to their own version of comfort in the world. I felt this powerful as I sense a large group judgment for not being more emotional in my sharing with the group. The instructor pointed out to the group that perhaps they were looking for signs of unhappiness in order to make a connection to me or any one else in their life. This was poignant for me as I began to understand how misery is a often taken as a sign of caring and being emotionally authentic, whereas happiness is judged as hiding the truth.

Is this inner strength available to everyone and if so, how? “Discomfort is a window into deep love – an opportunity for growth.”¹³ Anyone who has ever felt any discomfort of any kind in life is a candidate for inner strength. This is due to discomfort being the first indication for us to look within as to what is really happening for us. The opportunity to look within and investigate ourselves with love and non-judgment is indeed a powerful and grand opportunity for growth. The more we are willing to ask ourselves important questions, the more we hone our inner strength. People with this form of emotional authenticity are potent in their presence and contribution to the world. I loved the used of the ‘Inner strength diary’. We were invited to write down a specific situation in which we experienced discomfort/unhappiness. Then we would write our response to the stimulus and the belief behind this response. Once this was clear, we could write a new replacement belief and our changed response. This was a fantastic way of

¹³ Notes taken from lecture with Bears Kaufman, Option Institute, July 2005

being honest with myself about any reaction I would experience, as well as an easy way for me to transform my reactions into desired responses of relaxation and comfort.

“The biggest way to get to inner strength is to decide to make all your choices in comfort.”¹⁴ In the midst of the cacophony of the world, having the ability to be centered and comfortable, to know and trust ourselves, and to share from this place exemplifies inner strength. As more individuals begin to investigate and cultivate themselves, we will see a shift in emotional authenticity. There will be less room for misunderstandings as we will rely less on judgments and more on asking genuinely curious questions. From the microcosm of ourselves to the macrocosm of humanity, inner strength gives space for unique, individual expression while embracing uncertainty and the unknown. It is not through preaching inner strength that this shift will occur, but through becoming living examples of emotional authenticity without being co-conspirators of unhappiness.

¹⁴ Quote from Beverly, Option Institute, July 2005