



It's Exhausting to Live So Defensively

Today, I want to begin by reading a quote from Rachel, Naomi Remen who I believe is a psychiatrist and an author. She says, "Is it possible to live so defensively, that you never get to live at all?"

"Is it possible to live so defensively, that you never get to live at all." I've been thinking about that quote ever since I found it yesterday. It seems to me that part of what's happening right now in our current climate of pandemic, social injustice, and political unrest is that many of us have built huge walls around ourselves, and the pandemic certainly doesn't help with that. Things are quite chaotic right now, and I know that we are all feeling a good bit of stress collectively.

I want you to know that I think that's very normal given the climate that we're in. But I was thinking about this whole idea of defensiveness. I can feel it in myself. I can feel it in my heart, and the question lately that I've been asking myself is, how is this level of defensiveness actually keeping me from living? We become defended as a way to protect ourselves. We know that the brain's number one priority is to keep us safe. And sometimes it can really overreact the brain is quite dramatic. We tend to be melodramatic. Our brains tend to be melodramatic. Our brains tend to go overboard in its attempt to protect us. And we've got to bring online the executive functioning part of our brain that can override some of the some of the brain's tendency to keep us safe in ways that actually damage us and keep us from living a full and joyful life.

And so today I want to talk a little bit about the idea that, yes, we do need to protect ourselves. Sure, we do, but for the most part, most of us rarely ever in imminent danger. And so, first of all, I want you to know that in most likelihood if you're listening to this, you aren't in imminent danger right this moment. And the other thing I want to say to you is that if you are in imminent danger, your system is designed to protect you. It is designed to flood you with adrenaline and cortisol and all those good things, all those good chemicals. You can trust your system to do that for you.

All these thick, thick walls that we're building around ourselves, around our hearts, and around our particular little group of people may be more harmful than beneficial. And I'm wondering about shifting a bit. We do want to protect ourselves, but we could shift a bit to building fences with gates and you get to be in control of that gate... about who enters and exits. We don't have to block out people so so completely. Yes, there's a way in which we are more capable than we believe. We're not as fragile as this brain tries to tell us that we are. We really are



created to connect with one another, even with people who believe so differently than we believe.

I want to invite you today to look at ways you can exchange that thick, thick wall that you may have going with a fence. And again, I don't know what that looks like particularly for you. But it's an experiment, and experiment I'm going to be exploring for myself.

The question is, how can you and I live more fully? Even in the midst of a pandemic? In the midst of political and social unrest? How can we live more fully? I believe there's much more on offer for us than we're taking advantage of right now. So, play with these ideas and get really, really curious about whether or not you're too defended, and how you might begin to safely take down some of those defenses so that you can engage with one another with yourself and with life more fully.