

I Am Not Who I Once Was: Who We Become after Trauma.

Via Dina Strada

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This past weekend I attended one of the most powerful workshops I've ever been to. The theme was, "I Am Not Who I Was: Unfolding Your Own Myth."

We opened the evening by going around the circle and speaking a little about ourselves. When it was my turn, I didn't realize I was speaking or know where the words came from, but I heard myself saying with fierce, unapologetic bravado:

I am not who I was 2 years ago. I was a woman who listened to everything others told her she had to do, and never listened to my own inner voice. I hid so many parts of myself. I didn't like to be seen and I feared being heard because what if people didn't like what I had to say? I followed all the rules because I thought following them would bring me everything I wanted.

I shared the woman I am today, having gone through my own personal trauma. I'm different. I have a voice. I don't care what people think of me anymore. I allow myself to be seen—the real me, not the one I think will win people's approval.

I base my self-worth not on what anybody else thinks of me, but on what I think of myself.

I'm a bit of a rule-breaker now, and I don't apologize for that.

I will never be who I once was because of what I have been through.

The truth is, challenging circumstances in our lives change us. The death of a child, escape from an abusive relationship, a life threatening illness, an affair that forced you to face who you really are instead of who you were pretending to be, coming out from the other side of an addiction that almost killed you—those things change us.

We pass through them. And we are never, ever the same.

When these things happen in our lives, the experience lifts our energetic vibration and gets our attention. It forces us to pause, reflect on what we have been through and own who we now are, or who we want to be, now that our masks are off.

These experiences happen to us to shake things up. Get us out of our fog. Reveal things that may have been hidden or we just weren't willing to see.

I wanted to be a better version of myself after my life fell apart. I wanted to be more compassionate, more understanding, less judgmental and more accepting of myself and my own flaws.

I wanted to take my pain and use it to help others.

There was a moment in my own process where I cried to a friend that I wasn't who I used to be in a relationship. I couldn't open up—couldn't give of myself. I couldn't be vulnerable or loving or affectionate the way I had been. I said, "I'm not this person. Why can't I be the person I was?"

He said, "Because you are not the same person anymore. You will never be the person you were before this happened to you. You are forever changed from that experience and now you need to discover who that new person is."

Our job is not to apologize to the people in our lives who knew us before because we can't go back to being the person before the crisis. The crisis happened for a reason.

We sometimes can't go back into a marriage after we've had an affair, because the affair changed us.

We can't go back to a partner that supported us through an addiction, because what kept us with them in the first place was the addiction itself.

I have a friend who lost his son, and he told me the entire dynamic of his family changed when his son died. You don't lose a child or your partner and not have that loss completely change who you are at your very core. And once you've changed, everyone around you follows suit.

Your energy changes; their energy changes.

If you are the person trying to support a friend, a spouse, a lover or a family member through a life crisis, understand that they will not be the person you once knew.

Don't expect them to be.

Expect that they are either going to rise up to their full potential or spiral out of control. They will not fall into line and give in to things they know are no longer right for them anymore, because of what they have been through.

They will not comply.

They will be forced into decisions or just do what they're told to do anymore. They have some battle scars.

They will start living their life differently. Maybe doing things you don't understand or will make you scream, "Why are they doing this? This isn't who they are."

Except it is. It is who they are now. They are not who they once were. They are somebody new.

You will have to accept this new version of them if you want them in your life. Have compassion. Allow them to be this new person.

They arrived here because of something deeply traumatic and painful. They are coming into who they are meant to be because of it. It is part of their personal journey and one that will hopefully elevate them to a place far greater than they ever would have gotten before their trauma happened.

So celebrate it.