

D.G. COUNSELING INC.

1000 MAPLE AVE., DOWNERS GROVE, IL 60515

630-353-0697

OCTOBER 2009 NEWSLETTER

"LET THE WORLD KNOW YOU AS YOU ARE, NOT AS YOU THINK YOU SHOULD BE, BECAUSE SOONER OR LATER, IF YOU ARE POSING, YOU WILL FORGET THE POSE, AND THEN WHERE ARE YOU?"

~FANNY BRICE

"WE ARE SO ACCUSTOMED TO DISGUISE OURSELVES TO OTHERS THAT IN THE END WE BECOME DISGUISED TO OURSELVES."

~FRANÇOIS DUC DE LA ROCHEFOUCAULD

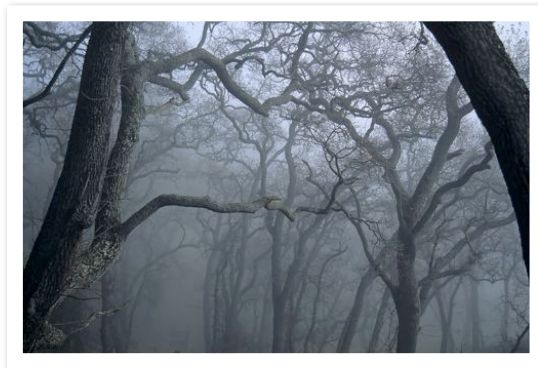
The leaves are changing colors, the air now comprises a brisk chill to it, and Halloween is right around the corner. Since that ghoulishly fun holiday is just a few short weeks away, this month's newsletter will pertain to the topic of masks. Now seemingly since the dawning of mankind, masks have been used for a myriad of purposes: as protection from the elements and enemies, as vital costume accessories, and as ceremonial necessities just to name a few. The term "masks" may also be synonymous with the various roles we play in our daily lives. For example, one may put on a professional mask while in the work place or one may put on a playful mask while pursuing some kind of recreational activity. In this figurative sense, one may argue that a mask may be very necessary and practical. That sounds like a pretty darn good argument to me! After all, this definition of a mask would imply that as people we possess the wherewithal to successfully assume various roles in our daily lives – that we are anything but one-dimensional creatures. In this case, a mask would

appear to be both a survival skill and a personality asset that helps us to navigate the ever-changing waters of life. In terms of the aforementioned uses, one may construe masks as being more or less constructive and purposeful. And indeed they can be. However, like just about everything else, masks have their downside as well. Psychologically and figuratively speaking, masks are often employed to hide our true selves and our true personalities for one reason or another. In this sense, a mask helps us to slip out of character and morph into something that in reality we are not. These kinds of masks are never a good thing and only serve to sabotage our authenticity. So what on earth could prompt us into disguising who we really are via the wearing of masks? For starters, insecurity and fear are often behind the proverbial steering wheel when one makes the conscious effort to operate incognito. When we feel we are inferior or "not good enough" we may also pretend to be something we are not in order to combat those feelings.

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If one navigates through life under a false persona on a regular basis, he or she will most likely feel downright exhausted, both emotionally and physically. Let's face it, putting up this kind of an act for a long period of time is not only disingenuous but also hard work! It is downright draining – it doesn't instill us with energy but rather robs us dry of it, and any endeavor that robs us of energy rather than restoring us is never worthwhile. The bottom line is this: we are all incredibly unique and special in our own way, and our own unique ways of experiencing the world is a monumental part of what makes our individuality such a beautiful gift. In our own individual uniqueness and authenticity there lies a beauty that is unmatched by anything we could potentially pretend to be. In closing, shed those masks and let your own distinctive light shine. I am fairly certain that your true light will attract to you those circumstances and individuals that refuel and enhance both your happiness and your spirit.

Article by Matthew Rome



What are some ways we can tell if we are wearing counterproductive or destructive masks?

- We make a conscious effort to act or behave solely based on the perceptions of others.
- We engage in negative self-talk or self-dialogue, making such statements as: "I'm not good enough" or "they'll never accept me for who I really am."
- We engage in self-destructive behaviors (i.e. drinking, drug-taking, promiscuity) because certain members of our peer group deem it as "cool."
- We do not engage in our passions or areas of interest because certain members of our peer group deem those activities as "un-cool" (i.e. I would really like to be a member of the chess club, but the "popular" or "cool" group at school would look down upon me for that.)
- We pay far more attention to surface level things such as appearance or name brand clothing.
- We constantly feel as though we are acting or playing a role in a theater play.
- We go to great lengths to put up walls emotionally and rarely if ever let those who care about us in.
- We are hanging out or spending considerable amounts of time with people who are bad influences or unhealthy to be around.