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Disinhibited Thoughts #22

So what about warning people in advance about a person's difference? Is this the polite and proper route to take – something that Miss Manners would applaud? Or is it a violation – yet another public exhibition of what, if all things in life were fair, would be your most private inner self? Arguments can be made for both sides, and so this is what I will endeavour to present over the next two instalments. My personal preference is the correct one only in that it is the right answer for ME at this point and place in my life. Only after having considered both camps will each of you be in the best possible position to find your OWN right answers, my friends.

I suppose the first question is whether or not your difference is a latent (hidden) or manifest (in your face) difference. Perhaps a difference that MAKES no difference IS no difference, at least as far as social situations go? But what about those unavoidably noticeable differences? These may be worth further reflection.....

First, from the perspective of a friend, family member, partner, teacher, or work colleague. On the one hand, warning other people in advance of meeting that person you know with a difference is minimizing to him or her. People are not defined by their difference, yet these actions set this tone. I mean, you don't 'warn' people that the friend you are about to meet is black, or gay, or in a wheelchair. Or do you? And is it really even your position to DO the warning? This is not your disorder or issue, and doing the legwork to accommodate another's difference sets a dangerous precedent. Many a family has fallen hostage to one member's compulsions or rages, for example, as they continually walk on eggshells to oblige neurological whims and avoid rocking any boats. Allowing the person to experience the 'real-world consequences' of either telling or not enables him or her to make certain choices, act upon them, and grow in his or her independence.

On the other hand, when I learned years ago that my parents had not told their staff (some of whom had worked for my father for years) that I had TS, this caught me very much off-guard. After so much time I had made the assumption that it would have come up at some point. Fair or not, my knee-jerk reaction was to feel that my parents were embarrassed of me to have gone so far out of their way to not say a thing. My open ticcing caught some members of my father's staff very much off-guard. Given those awkward moments, perhaps the true consideration of giving a 'warning' lies in sparing unsuspecting others from the embarrassment of their uninformed reactions.

Will conclude next time, my friends!

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