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Disinhibited Thoughts #5

“Don’t use the disorder as an excuse”! “Take responsibility for your actions”! “Saying that you have Tourette Syndrome is just a convenience”.

These are phrases that I’ll wager we’ve all heard more than once. As we should. These are important principles to abide by -- ones on which it is easy to slip, I can well attest. It is tempting to assume that, because we can now actually point to the things that are not working properly in the TS brain, this means that the person with TS is powerless to effect change and is thus not responsible for his/her actions. For example, how many times have YOU caught yourself beginning an evaluation of yourself or something you’ve done with, “Considering that I have Tourette Syndrome.....”?

My topic this time around IS about responsibility for your actions. However it is not actually directed at Touretters. It is directed at everyone else.

We Touretters are very visible in our numerous demons, and our requirement to be responsible for them all is obvious. Perhaps because we project the need to be responsible so blatantly, some feel free to drape all of their own ownership in a situation onto us as well. And perhaps because we are so used to hearing that we must take responsibility, we are also quick to accept all ownership. In that way, people with TS can sometimes become very convenient “coat-hangers” onto which others shrug their accountability. After all, Touretters can always be relied on to amplify a reaction. In doing so we conveniently provide the means for others to move the focus of the situation off of themselves and onto the overreaction.

It is only too effortless to obscure your own behaviour behind ours. We are easy to blame, and of course we have our share of blames to shoulder. But remember that even OVERreactions are still VALID reactions. We are still reacting TO something. It is simple to remember the Tourettic response. It is a little bit more difficult to remember that there was a REASON for that response, no matter how disproportional the cause was to the effect.

In any situation, both people involved are responsible for their own part in it. Sometimes, however, the person who is made to be wholly responsible for the situation is merely the person who was second-fastest in recognizing the OTHER person’s responsibilities....

Don’t assume that OUR need to take responsibility for our own actions somehow supercedes your own. You’ll be surprised how quickly a Tser’s escalation can end when you admit your own faults in a situation. To those with TS, I also suggest that self-esteem and respect from others can begin with the decision to carry your own weights, but not those of others.

Until next time, my friends!!

Duncan

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