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Publishing:

*Nix Your Tics! Eliminate Unwanted Tic Symptoms:
A How-To Guide for Young People*

T(r)IC(k)S #10: The Positives Of Disinhibition Part II!

No pain no gain the saying goes. To strengthen your muscles you have to “feel the burn”. After all, what doesn't kill you makes you stronger.

TS doesn't kill you. And like the grain of sand within the oyster that, through continual irritation, becomes a pearl TS and its associated disorders can, through subjecting you to considerable negative, lead to considerable positive.

☑ In an introductory letter to my website I welcome new visitors as “friends”, and then point out how “you can meet wonderful people, and make strong, deep bonds with them almost instantaneously just because of a little similar neurobiological abnormality...In that way, TS is a gift, isn't it?”.

☑ Even apart from my friends of like neurology I find that my TS is a handy ‘normie’ friend gauge though. You've perhaps heard it said that it is only during a time of need or in the midst of crisis that one's ‘true’ friends can be discriminated from acquaintances, “back-stabbers”, or those who were merely in for the fair weather. This is an experience that many of us TS'ers are spared from -- there's nothing like blatant peculiarities to shuck the chaff from the get-go! Like sifting for gold our condition provides for us an easy glimpse into the character of people we meet; only those of genuine substance remain in the pan. The vast majority of people in this world only ever have a select handful of truly good friends. We at least have no illusions about it.

☑ Not only do we attract great friends, but also we ARE great friends! Frequent mistreatment engenders an extreme appreciation for kindness: we are fiercely loyal, eager to please, and keen to commit ourselves to those who love us.

☑ Also making us good friend material is our sensitivity to emotion, and empathy for others. We walk a lot of miles in a lot of shoes. From the vantage point of a number of disorders we see a lot of scenery, and our disinhibition ensures that we feel every bit of the journey deeply. Because we know from personal experience “how it feels”, and how misleading surface appearances can be, we are adept at looking past the surface to the core of people, situations, and issues.

☑ I personally found that my intimate understanding of human nature, borne largely from seeing the worst of it, made learning psychology and connecting with clients in pain easy. It also gave me considerable legitimacy and credibility with clients in my professional life. Having recently begun an internship rotation working with individuals with completely different issues from my own helps me to appreciate how fortunate I've been in the past to have the inside ‘skinny’ on TS+. I can say things with great authority in our population that I wouldn't dare presume in another. One also suspects that a mere BA would never have been encouraged, or been invited, to speak on as many occasions as I was had I not been diagnosed with *something*.

☑ TS is a fantastic stress-o-meter. The effects of increased arousal can be minuscule and easily missed in an inhibited individual. Equipped with tics, compulsions, and little buffer left in the frustration tolerance domain, however, means that anxiety-provoking elements in our lives do not remain undetected for long.



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☒ Due in part to the example immediately above, we are often self-aware far beyond our years. Whether I want to face my foibles or not is a moot point – they rest on my sleeve catcalling indiscriminately at all who pass by. Such unremitting introspection may breed another fine pearl: self-acceptance. When forced onto a high-speed course through acknowledgement of, anger at, embarrassment of, and negotiation with oneself, one cannot help but gain more than his/her measure of internal harmony. Outright actualization has the potential to occur at an age where most still stuff their ‘elephants’ deep into dark psychological corners, fearful of their discovery and blind to the disruption and havoc they continue to wreak.

☒ Living with your shortcomings exposed, as opposed to harbouring more hidden blemishes, means that you are quickly given a name to identify these challenges, whereas others suffer in anonymity. It means that you cannot avoid tackling your obstacles head on, whereas others, in hiding, prolong their suffering. It means we are pushed hard to implement strategies to shed our limitations, while others trudge, burdened, throughout life. Finally, through this process we learn that change *is* possible through incremental steps whereas so many others assume that the way they are is unalterable, leading to a sense of helplessness in improving themselves.

☒ Ok, maybe we have to explicitly learn skills that others possess automatically and maybe that is a royal pain. The flip-side is that when you **DO** finally learn these skills consciously, you really have them cold! Despite our initial developmental lag we may later surpass the ‘normie’ in our ability to organize and plan, deliberate, problem-solve, and to be responsible and accountable once in environments or situations where natural reflex is not sufficient.

☒ For so long I was so misunderstood. At the core of my frustration was the belief that if everyone understood me better they would see I really wasn’t bad. Hence all that needed to be done was for me to hone my ability to tell them about the things they evidently didn’t know: I simply wasn’t explaining myself adequately. By obsessively rephrasing things until they were “just right” (a practice that I would almost certainly have stopped if I only could have), I became an eloquent communicator – now part of my livelihood. I teach, I conduct workshops, and I now intersperse my prose with song thanks to an extraordinarily grating high-pitched bark that, by forever tempering my vocal cords, has allowed me to enjoy a strong diaphragm, a voice with considerable range, and good tonal control. Hey, at this point in my life I’d be more devastated if I woke up tomorrow morning and *didn’t* have TS!

To wrap up what began 2 INSTALLMENTS ago, knowing all these positives is important to be balanced in one’s perception of TS. Focusing on them to the exclusion or denial of the shortcomings, though, is not the take-home message I intend. Such a mind-frame causes one to be unprepared for the inevitable difficulties that being a person with TS+ can bring. Rather, my point is that undue lamentation of TS’s negatives OR undue celebration of its positives is about as sensible as endless rumination over the benefits or liabilities of, say, one’s height. There is little to be gained from it: this is simply how you are. So you move on and, like anyone else in life, you use what you are to your greatest advantage.

Here’s to moving on!

cheers!
Duncan

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