



## Shorting Myself

More than twenty years ago I was living in Japan studying Aikido and a traditional healing art called Kiatsu. One day a student asked the Sensei if Kiatsu would work if you did it on yourself. He responded that self-treatment certainly could work, but usually was not effective. This was a surprising answer and we pressed him for an explanation. He said that although we worked on a client for a full hour, most of us only worked on ourselves for a few minutes. Not only were our self-treatments too short, but we also were less centered, less focused, and had much poorer quality ki expression when working on ourselves.

Truth be told, he was completely accurate in my case. The 'Doug' that I used to treat another person had little resemblance to the 'Doug' treating myself. At the time I remember being deeply troubled by this realization. Even more disturbing is the fact that I'm still doing it that way, at least in part.

### CAUSES

*Logically, it makes no sense at all to treat myself as a second-class client or to inflict poor quality attention and energy upon myself.* The questions arise, *"What is driving this tendency?" "What is behind this double standard?"*

Psychologically, I look to my own self-esteem issues. On some level do I feel that I'm not worth my best effort? Sometimes that's part of it. Strangely, the opposite belief also comes into play. Another part of me is delusional and is convinced that I am so sophisticated that I should respond beautifully to just a few moments of work. Between the extremes of these two viewpoints, it's hard for me to win!

This tendency to undervalue my own care is also a product of a busy, time-driven lifestyle. There are always more things to do in a day than I have time for. I cut corners where I can, in order to get more things done; self-care often suffers as a result.

Another significant factor is pure habit. I've always done it this way so I continue on with the same old same old. The first step to changing my long-standing habit is to drag it out of its comfortable hiding place and into the light where it can be seen clearly. Once out in the open, I can get a clearer view of the psychological and emotional forces behind this condition. Empowered by these insights, I can begin to exercise genuine choice as to my behavior.

### PRIORITIES AND CHOICES

Changing this pattern requires a re-examination of my priorities and choices. At this point in my life I am so different than I was when this habit was established. Now I am comfortable confronting my self-esteem issues and my delusions in order to make self-care a priority. My habit of shorting myself partially originated in a win-lose belief that honoring my own needs automatically translated into shorting someone else's needs. No matter whose needs I selected, someone had to lose. Historically, I chose to give the quality care to others and to be 'content' with the dregs and leftovers for myself. [Of course, the 'being

content' was only the face I showed the world; internally I was rotating between the roles of superior hero, unseen victim, martyr, etc.]

*As I've matured, it now seems possible that skills such as communication and good boundaries allow enough space for a balance between my needs and the needs of others. This opens the possibility that my needs can spend some time at the center of my own life. At this juncture I am faced with a decision as to my integrity, to the level of consistency between my internal and external actions.* To my clients I advocate the point of view that getting good therapeutic treatments has great value. In order to maintain my integrity, I need this viewpoint to apply to me as well as to my clients. Not only does this mean that I get therapeutic sessions from other practitioners, but it also can mean that I give to myself the benefit of my own expertise and experience. If I choose to self-treat, then I owe it to myself to offer the very best in me, just like I do to any client.

This chronic inconsistency between my treatment of others and my self-treatment highlights one of my internal double standards. Thus revealed, I have the option to select the path of integrity; I can choose to utilize one, consistent standard of care for both my clients and myself. *With this orientation, self-care seems like a great use of my time and energy as well as an excellent investment in my future wellbeing.*

Wishing you health and peace,

Doug

Author's Note: One challenge of this article was that my pattern is not necessarily thy pattern. For example, if you favor narcissism over self-denial, then these issues will take a very different form. *Nevertheless, the central idea of shorting oneself does apply to each of us, regardless of its disguise. Self-inquiry as to our internal double standards can be extremely valuable.* -- D

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