

## Where Can You Fit In?

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- Cecile M. Springer

Few of us think about the paradox, that our society teaches us to not extend ourselves (because we may clash with the establishment), yet those of us who do extend ourselves beyond what we believed we could accomplish find that we have achieved a new life, a new existence that causes us to abandon the restrictions and limitations of our old life in favour of the new one we unexpectedly adopted.

More than one world class athlete has declared that they were once just ordinary people with extraordinary aspirations and determination to be the best they could be, if possible the best in the world. True, for most athletic endeavours the participant needs a good head start, a body whose coordination and muscle firing mechanisms work to the advantage of the sport or event in which they expect to excel. Some claim they were just ordinary people before they began their quest for excellence.

Every athlete agrees that the most important quality is determination, or perseverance, if you will. The vast majority of us would not put ourselves through the demanding regime that being world class requires. Nor would we be prepared to make the sacrifices necessary in our personal, family, social and work/education lives to exceed all others in one single field.

But it can be done and it has been done many times. The sacrifices required to be the best may seem beyond what is acceptable. However, most of us don't feel the need to be the best in the world. In practice, most of us only need to feel that we are the best at something in whatever work or social groups we belong to.

That speaks to our need for self esteem. We need to feel that we are better than most others at something, if only to assure ourselves of the value or worth we hold in our group. That's natural. Every member of a social species of animal knows its place or position within its group. That position ranks higher in the hierarchy when a member is the best at something that is recognized to have value to the group, or even to the individual or family.

Our society mitigates against our excelling. Often others don't want us to excel at anything. Be good, but don't be great. Don't be better than I am. This too is natural. Most people feel the need to have a higher ranking in the group, so when someone else in the group excels at something, the upstart may displace the higher ranking person, causing that person to lose status within the group.

We also have people who need attention. They don't want others to steal their attention by excelling at something at which they are not as good. These people are insecure, they lack sufficient self esteem to encourage others to improve themselves. But they are a reality of life.

Those who would succeed at being the best they can be, often better than everyone else around them, need to understand that they will always have others who don't want them to succeed, don't want them to attract attention, don't want them to achieve higher status within the group because they fear losing their own position.

These are facts of life. The higher a person rises in social ranking, the more opposition they will gather. Those who avoid the opposition find themselves suffering from the indignities of low social ranking.

Either way, life is tough. But that's natural too. Every living thing has to struggle. We humans are more fortunate than most animals because we can appreciate happiness, success, achievement, love, music and so on. On balance, we get more good with the bad we must endure in life than most other creatures of this planet.

Bill Allin

***Turning It Around: Causes and Cures for Today's Epidemic Social Problems***, a book about how to prepare children for the trials and challenges they will face as adolescents and adults so that they don't jump the rails and run amok with the kinds of troubles that many people face.

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