



## THE WAY OUT OF COMPARE & DESPAIR:

### “Concern Yourself with You”

When I was a kid, my mom would constantly tell me something that sticks with me to this day. It became a mantra I used in elementary school, carried on to high school, and still use today well into adulthood. When I found myself constantly making choices based on other kids, my mom would say to me, “Concern yourself with you.”

Comparison is an easy trap to get caught in. With the advent of social media long after my mom first uttered the epic “Concern yourself with you” mantra, I wonder if perhaps she was predicting what was to come in an era where comparing yourself to other peoples’ highlight reels is easier and more addictive than ever.

Have you ever gone on a social stalking binge of someone, and next thing you know you’re so far down their Instagram feed that your thumbs hurt from scrolling and you pray they won’t slip and accidentally double-tap a photo, “liking” it and revealing how deep into their past you’ve scrolled? (Um,

yeah . . . clearly that's too specific to not be an autobiographical example.) Anyway, after talking with countless people I realized I wasn't alone, and this comparison game is rampant. I found myself giving the same advice to my friends and clients that my mom gave me long ago.

This tool guides us to take my mom's advice and quit the compare-and-despair game we so often default to. Whether it's a mentor, a guru, a celebrity, your accomplished friend from high school, or your ex-boyfriend's new girlfriend, comparing yourself keeps you stuck and makes you feel less than.

Conan O'Brien once said in a commencement speech at Dartmouth that comedians of his generation desperately wanted to be the next David Letterman. He remarked, "It is our failure to become our perceived ideal that ultimately defines us and makes us unique." I found that to be a deeply profound lesson of authenticity. We have to concern ourselves with our own truth, and not try to emulate anyone else's.

The bottom line is that whenever you're comparing yourself to others, you're not concerned with you. The interesting thing is, the more you are *yourself*, the more attractive you become. This tool guides you to instead use who you're comparing yourself to as a guide for something you want more of within yourself, which probably isn't being fully expressed.

***Directions:***

- *Step 1:* Make a list of the people you most compare yourself to. Then examine how you're separating yourself by answering these two questions for each person on your list (if there are several people, choose just one or two for this exercise today):

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- a) *Are you making yourself “more special” or “better” than those you are comparing yourself to? If yes, move on to Step 2.*
- b) *Are you making yourself “less special” or “worse” than those you’re comparing yourself to? That is, are you regarding them as better than you or more special by either idolizing them or feeling jealousy toward them? If yes, move on to Step 3.*
- *Step 2: Answer the following questions in your journal if you answered “yes” to question (a) above:*
  - *What is it within you that feels insecurity around this person you’re comparing yourself to?*
  - *What is it within you that makes you feel like you need to perceive yourself as better than him or her?*
  - *In what ways are you both equal?*
  - *How can you see him or her with love instead?*

When you’re done, move on to Step 4.

- *Step 3: Answer the following questions in your journal if you answered “yes” to question (b) above:*
  - *What are the specific qualities or attributes that you find most inspiring about this person you’re comparing yourself to?*

## *Let it Out*

- *What is he or she mirroring back to you regarding qualities that are within you but are perhaps unawakened?*
- *How can you look at him or her as a positive example of inspiration?*
- *How can you embrace ways you are unique from him or her and love those qualities about yourself?*
- *In what ways are you both equal?*
- *Can you find common humanity with him or her?*
- *Step 4: Now concern yourself with you. Write a sentence about yourself in the third person as if *someone else* were admiring *you*. This is your time to toot your own horn, which may feel uncomfortable. It does for me, but I'll take one for the team and give you an example: "Katie is an awesome podcast host, really kills it on the ukulele, knows how to write a mean journal prompt, and has an adorable little dog." See there, that wasn't so bad—give it a go!*
- *Bonus step: Tweet your 140-character horn toot at me (@katiedalebout)! I want to see how awesome you are.*

