

# The Center for Above the Line Living--Monthly Musings, July 2007

## Being Yourself—Above and Below the Line

One of the wonderful things about our most intimate relationships is the experience of being loved “warts and all.” When Noah was very small, we would pick him up from pre-school at the end of the day to find him invariably in a terrible mood. “How was your day, honey?” we’d ask, driving home. “Don’t *talk* to me!” he’d wail from his car seat.

We were talking to a friend about our difficult nightly trip home. A more experienced mom, she said this was typical for a toddler. “He’s been on his best behavior all day, but when he’s with you he feels so secure that he can relax. Don’t worry,” she said, “he’ll grow out of it.”

The problem is, many of us don’t grow out of it. Ironically, we often show our worst sides to the people we love most. We allow ourselves to react and speak sharply without thinking, because we assume they won’t reject us even if we’re not on our best behavior.

One of the reasons we create committed partnerships and build families is our deep longing to be loved and feel secure and connected *no matter what*. We want a safe refuge from the world where we can simply be ourselves. But what does it mean to be yourself?

As Ursula (my dear friend and business partner) pointed out to me the other day, there is a significant difference between being yourself below the line and being yourself above the line.

“Being yourself” below the line is a reactive state where loved ones are used as a place to vent one’s

frustrations with the world. From here, we subconsciously claim the right to not be careful with our speech or actions, because they are “supposed” to love us no matter what. But below the line behavior takes a terrible toll, because it creates more of itself. Eventually even the deepest love wears thin.

Conversely, “being yourself” from an above the line perspective means being honest, vulnerable and responsible: being *honest* about what you are really feeling (e.g., the fear underneath the surface emotion—see MM June), being *vulnerable* enough to share this, and being *responsible* for your own emotional state; that is, resisting the urge to blame someone else for how you are feeling. When we courageously share ourselves in this way, we create deep intimacy and connection.

Being yourself above the line is, in reality, being your truest self. Fear is what gets in the way of our innate essence, love. When we are above the line, intimate relationships can provide a place to work through and heal old fears and disempowering beliefs, because the safety and security allow us to reveal our tender hearts.

Forgive me for a somewhat oversimplified view of human relationships. It’s incomplete and certainly imperfect. I only wish to offer a new perspective, to pose a question: In your dearest and most precious relationships, are you taking the opportunity to be your truest self—above the line? Or are you doing something else?

To strengthen your ability to live and relate from above the line, please join us this fall for the first ever 3-day workshop on Above the Line Living. For a brochure, email me at [ann.betz@gmail.com](mailto:ann.betz@gmail.com). For information on additional workshops and events, please visit [www.centerforall.com](http://www.centerforall.com)