

I fell in love with the song "Circle" by Edie Brickell & The New Bohemians the very first time I heard it. The song starts out, "Me, I'm a part of your circle of friends." I'm sure those words accompanied by the catchy melody triggered some cheesy thought in my head such as, "Oh, I love songs about friends," and then I didn't pay any attention to the rest of the lyrics. It wasn't until years later that I bothered to listen to the lines closely. Once I did, I moved from loving to being confused about the song. Was it even about a friendship? Maybe it was about a breakup, being alone or growing up. I couldn't tell you. Even on Google, I was unable to find anyone confident that they knew what the song meant. I couldn't explain why (it clearly wasn't because I "got" the song), but for some reason, after I spent time examining the lyrics and searching online for a possible meaning the song somehow had a stronger grip on me.

Then last month as I was teaching a section of our Narrative Coaching certification that darn song popped into my head. I suddenly knew why I didn't understand the lyrics before and what they meant now. In that moment of clarity, I also became aware I was now down one epiphany. (Maya Angelou claimed that we each will roughly experience 250 epiphanies in our lives. And now I just wasted one of my great moments of illumination on a song.)

So, what caused and what exactly was my epiphany? It was triggered by a combination of points I was sharing in class regarding change. We know and observe over and over that even if a person desires change and/or they don't have a choice but to change it doesn't come easy. What we don't always know and/or observe are the many unseen and unidentified influencers that keep a person trapped in their current narrative holding them hostage from making the change. The list of what stops people from moving forward can be extensive and yet, all the countless reasons frequently (not always) can be dwindled down to one underlying concern—belonging. While we are preprogrammed to become who we are meant to be we are also hardwired to seek a place in the world to belong. Our need to belong is so deep-rooted it can override our drive to become.

In the class that day, I went on to share what often appears as a lack of commitment toward our goals is more often a fear of what will happen if we go after those goals. If we share our ideas and dreams, others may make fun of or diminish them. If we try and fail, others may reject us. If we actually reach our destination others may not be there to greet us. The "what if's" multiply and become daunting. This drives us to either assume rejection without testing our assumptions avoiding any pain that could possibly occur. Or, if we are brave enough to begin, we often will scan for any indication of judgment, rejection, or not fitting in to reinforce that we should merely stay in our current identity. We convince ourselves there is too much to lose if we go after what we truly want.

The sad reality is that there most likely will be some level of judgment, rejection or not fitting in anymore if we go after what we desire. People get used to our current roles and create expectations based on those roles. When we try to move beyond them, the people around us are not developing and changing at the same rate as us. They view the world through their level of personal growth and presume others will act accordingly to their needs based on this assumption. This is what triggered my moment of enlightenment with the song. I didn't

understand the song before because I didn't fully comprehend the struggle between becoming and belonging. Not until I started diving deep into the Narrative Coaching did I grasp the meaning of a paradox which is we have to do the opposite of what feels natural or right to get the outcomes we crave. While we think "to become" who we are meant to be, we can remain where we currently belong. Yet, the reverse is actually true. "Belonging" only happens when we can share our gifts and talents with the world and not mask who we are to fit into what we believe others want us to be. We must let go of where we belong so we can indeed become then we will discover and fit in where we are meant to reside. Until that happens, we don't really belong anywhere. We are merely settling for where we initially landed instead of ascending to where we are designed to arrive. In the song, I believe her friend realized it was time to go and become who she/he was meant to be. The singer is at a different level of growth. She wants her friend to come back to her level.

*“Me, I'm a part of your circle of friends
And we notice you don't come around
Me, I think it all depends on you
Touching ground with us but”*

But then she gives up. She decides everyone leaves eventually, and she tries to convince herself it's for the best.

*I quit, I give up, nothing's good enough for anybody else
It seems
And I quit, I give up, nothing's good enough for anybody else
It seems*

*And being alone is the, is the best way to be
When I'm by myself it's the best way to be
When I'm all alone it's the best way to be
When I'm by myself, nobody else can say goodbye
Everything is temporary anyway*

*When the streets are wet, the colors slip into the sky
But I don't know why that means you and I are
That means you and I*

*I quit, I give up, nothing's good enough for anybody else
It seems
And I quit, I give up, nothing's good enough for anybody else
It seems*

*And being alone is the, is the best way to be
When I'm by myself, it's the best way to be
When I'm all alone, it's the best way to be*

*When I'm by myself, nobody else can say
Me, I'm a part of your circle of friends
And we noticed you don't come around
La la la la la la la*

What she doesn't realize is it's actually an opportunity for her. If I were an artist and could add one more line to the song, I'd have her waking up to what she's gaining from the situation versus what she's losing. My lines would be something like...

*Thanks for ditching us, now I can actually see
This was just a pit stop for you and me
I'm okay standing alone, it is the best place to be
Next, I'll stand among those who truly feed me
La la la la la la la*

As you can tell, I'm not a songwriter. And, I'm guessing there are some of you who also think that I'm not a very good interpreter of music either. But, this was my take. Perhaps tomorrow I will have a different view altogether.

Our journey to discovering and becoming who we are inherently designed to be is part of the music of our lives.

- What type of music is filling your life?
- What message is it sending?
- What new music might you need to tune into?
- Who might not enjoy your selection?
- How do you not give up listening to what makes your heart sing?