

The Selfie Craze

We have certainly come a long way with modern technology. Who would have thought that we could hold a phone in our hands and take our own photos or a group photo and then send them instantly anywhere around the world on a social media platform--Messenger, WhatsApp, Snapchat, etc. To take even more real and beautiful photos of yourself, you can attach a selfie stick to the phone to extend it away from yourself. It can also allow you to take photos from unusual positions and make it look as though someone is taking the photo.

Ann Steele, a marriage and family therapist, writes in an article entitled, "What Do #Selfies Say about The Psychology of You?" the following: "Finding fulfillment is one reason why the selfie has become such a focal point in people's lives. People take selfies of just about anything and everything they do in their lives and post pictures on social media sites where hundreds of people will see them. Only a couple of decades ago, people with that much exposure would have been considered celebrities. Many people believe that this generation is the one that was brought up on the idea that they are special, that they can achieve anything." Wow! That's positive. Writer Ryan Maher states that people take selfies because they want to be loved, accepted, and need connection. Just writing about this is exciting. However, there is a dark side to all of this.

As I observe the behavior of people, I notice there are some who very often are taking selfies, even when I think there is no need to. Why is this? Recently I came across a study out of Brigham Young University that revealed three different reasons people take lots of selfies. Here are the reasons: "1) To communicate with their friends and family and engage with them. That could be like taking a selfie with your "I Voted" sticker to try to motivate other people to also vote. 2) To record key events in your life and preserve memories. 3) And to publicize yourself for vain or narcissistic reasons, like having people see how amazing your life is." This last point is a serious one.

Several weeks ago I was in a local eatery waiting for an order. While I was waiting I noticed a young lady who walked in, placed her order, then took out her cell phone and began taking photos of herself right at the cashier's counter. At first I thought she was fixing her hair because she was constantly changing the style. Then I quickly noticed she had a phone in her hands and she began fixing and fixing and turning and twisting her body for the best position. For about fifteen minutes she continued that parade of self-admiration. Then, since her order was not ready yet, she turned around and walked outside. Within five minutes she returned and stood in front of the cashier and continued to admire herself and taking a barrage of selfies. Why was she doing this?

MENTAL HEALTH AND SELFIES

Stephen Matthews in his online article for October 2016, states: "Research is now telling us that those who constantly take pictures of themselves are more likely to be lonely. It could also be a sign of trouble in their relationships or mental health problems, experts found. Constant self-snappers are also more likely to be vain and attention-seeking too, a study revealed." Simply put, it is a demonstration of narcissistic behavior. What is the meaning of "narcissistic?" The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Fifth Edition (DSM5) states that the diagnostic criteria for narcissistic personality disorder are requiring excessive admiration, having a grandiose sense of self-importance and a sense of entitlement. Other criteria include lack of empathy, often envious of others or believes that others are envious of him or her, and show arrogant, haughty behaviors or attitudes.

Let me caution you. Not everyone who takes a selfie is narcissistic. It is the excessive, seemingly-cant'-stop-taking craze that is of concern here.

Is there something wrong with loving yourself? Certainly not. Personal love is an important criterion for a healthy self-image. However, the extreme self-love that is demonstrated by the constant taking of selfies is what's negative. These people might be crying out for help and deeply wounded emotionally.

GET PERMISSION

Another selfie craze is the inclusion of unsuspected persons in the photo. Someone would see an old friend or would have made acquaintance with a new friend and would want to take a selfie. I encourage persons not to include other persons in your selfie without their permission. Sometimes the one included in the photo is not aware that the one who is taking the selfie is connected to the internet and the photo can be circling the globe within a few seconds. You have the right to say "no, thank you." It is frightening though how fast this can happen. A person can just run up to someone and snap a selfie within a few second and disappear. Your photo is then published all over the Internet. Please selfie takers, do not do that. Always seek permission. If you do get permission, make sure to explain how the photo will be used. The person might not have a problem taking the selfie but may not want it placed on certain social media platforms. Be courteous.

CALL FOR HELP

Dear friend, if you are constantly taking photos of yourself or having difficulty not to capture a moment in time, you may need professional help. You may be wounded emotionally. Call for help today to your nearest psychologist.

THE GREAT FAMILY SELFIE

As I conclude, I must remind us about the positive side of selfies. Many families, not able to afford a professional photographer, are able to capture special moments in their lives that were not possible decades ago. Because the phone is so accessible a quick move of the hands can capture a moment that will bring joy and satisfaction to many in the future. It can log a memory that was once impossible to do. I've seen so many wonderful family selfies that only could have happened because someone had a phone and thought quickly to take a photo. Remember, be a healthy selfie taker.

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