

21. Playing the Game

Most of us feel we have no choice but to play the game. We're conditioned at home and in school to be obedient, get good grades, give 110% to authority, win in sports/everything, and be good at what we do.

We're told to get jobs, make as much money and consume as much stuff as possible. We're told to trust democracy, government and capitalism to manage our societies and lives, money is good, more's better, and our success is up to us. Our religions tell us what to believe. We watch TV to be programmed about what's going on and what to think, do and feel about it, forget about the present and be passive, learn love is only found in others, and always be afraid. We're told every-one and thing else is bad and wrong, but we're good and the problems come from outside. We're taught to believe, if we're ever dissatisfied and unhappy with the game, there's something wrong with us. Play the game, and it will all work out.

So, we play the game, like good boys and girls, believe what we're told, execute our programming, go to school, obey, get good grades, win, and take on debt for college. We seek love in another, kind'a find it, and take on responsibilities for children and home debt, so we have to play the game. We get a job, making as much money for the owner as possible, which even NPR announcers say routinely on the air is the purpose of any business. We consume all we can, trying to keep up with the Joneses, sucking up to whoever does or might pay us, seeking more money. We watch TV for our programming.

We're afraid of what's out there, hate problems coming from out there and the others who make them. We don't sleep enough and barely have any vacation. We get fat and unhealthy, because we have no time or will to be healthy. We seek therapy to help us fix what's wrong with us when we feel bad about any of it. Finally, we bankrupt ourselves and our families trying to prevent dying, which is inevitable.

Here's the thing: the biggest winners of the game are those who produce the game. Like in Las Vegas, the real winner of all of those games we lose ourselves and our money in at the casinos is "the house." The games are carefully designed and structured to benefit some over others: the business owners, and those who typically already start out ahead and have more than enough, and some of their minions.

Who benefits from obedience? Those who tell us what to do. Who benefits from conditioning and programming? Those who control their content. Who benefits from debt? Those we're indebted to. Who benefits from our work in our jobs? Those who own the businesses. Who benefits from our fear? Those we give our power to. Who benefits from our consumption? Those who sell what we consume. Who benefits from our obsessive focus on money? Those who control the money. Who benefits from our lack of personal time? Those who use our time for their benefit. Who benefits from our suffering? Those who sell us relief. In almost all cases, the primary beneficiaries are business stakeholders, politicians, and those who control money, markets, property, religions and governments.

Most of us play the game, because it's so deep in our conditioning we simply do it unconsciously, or because we don't feel like we have a choice. That's the way it is. We have to work with that to survive. We can't possibly change the game, because we don't have the power. If we don't feel good about it or are not doing well, it's because we're not good enough, or something is wrong with us.

The game is rigged. We do not have to play a rigged game. We can break free of it, unplug, change our conditioning, change our being, feelings and actions, and do so very many other things.

We are told the purpose of all businesses is to make as much money as possible for their owners. No. It's not. The purpose of any business or organization is to execute its mission and to uphold its values. Money is just a means. A mission can be anything those in the organization agree to: helping others, raising good food, making a community work for its members, preserving nature, eliminating garbage, sharing, making fun times, raising our young, being healthy, providing security, promoting fairness, creating new things, sharing information, developing knowledge or enjoying leisure. We don't have to support or be a part of an organization whose mission we do not agree with or is not true to its mission.

We do not have to do what anyone tells us to, ever. By refusing, we no longer give away our power. We do not have to be stuck with our conditioning. It is hard, but we can disentangle, reject it and replace it if we really try. We don't have to be afraid. Fear is a choice we can reject if we have courage. We don't have to submit to TV or other programming. We can simply turn it off and not consume it. We don't have to become slaves of debt. We can simply not spend money we don't have. We don't have to believe something wrong with us, not the game, if we feel bad. We don't have to do anything.

We don't have to obsess over money. We can create other kinds of living communities that are self-sustaining and don't require money. We don't have to not have time for what we value. We can simply make and take the time for what we value. We don't have to pay others for treatments for bad health. We can simply be, feel and do proactively what makes us healthy, in healthy environments. We don't have to accept that our problems come from somewhere outside of our selves, our society and systems. We can just find the true sources within our systems, society and selves and fix those. We don't have to seek fulfillment and worth in consumption. We can find it in something better, more satisfying and real.

The game as it is now being played is not sustainable. Our population growth is advancing toward catastrophic collapse; we're changing our climate for the worse, destroying our natural systems and environments; we're suffering from unfairness in wealth and income distributions that are pushing us toward revolt; we're struggling; and too many are harmed and don't feel good about and in the game.

If we go along with the game, we are complicit in the game. We're part of creating its harms. "I was just playing the game I was conditioned to" is like a Nuremburg trial Nazi saying "I was just following orders". We're part of the evil and harms if we play along with a corrupt and rigged game that creates harms. Let's take the responsibility and actions needed to create communities, lives and ways of being that are sustainable, fair and feel good. No more playing along with games that are rigged and doing harm.