



ASK AMANDA JAYNE

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The director of the Human Origins Programme at the Smithsonian Institution National Museum of Natural History, Rich Potts says: “The evolution of the brain is the most obvious example of how we evolve to adapt, but in the modern era, we know that in the human genome there are all kinds of interactions that allow human organisms to have plasticity . . . the capacity to adjust itself an evolved characteristic.

We share information, we create and pass on knowledge. That’s the means by which humans are able to adjust to new situations, and it’s what differentiates humans from our earlier ancestors.”

Carl Rogers was a humanist psychologist who developed the person centred approach in psychotherapy. He named our innate drive to grow and achieve our full potential as individuals the ‘actualizing tendency’. What this is, is an automatic and underlying motivation to become the absolute best that we can be under any given circumstances. To grow as a person, do great things, reach our highest potential and get the most out of life.

He uses an example of a potato which has been left in the bottom of a sack in a dark cellar. The ‘actualising tendency’ of that potato is to grow and achieve whatever is possible in the given circumstances. So even though there is only one chink of light each time the cellar door is opened that potato will throw out a hopeful green shoot which will reach towards the light.

It doesn’t think: “Oh what’s the point I’ll never be a proper potato?” Although it’s thin and spindly, it is doing the best it can and it is being the best it can be under the given circumstances. If that potato is discovered and planted it will throw up shoots through the earth and become a fully grown and fabulous version of a potato. But whatever happens, that potato will become the best it can be.



Picture: ilkercekk / iStock / Getty Images Plus

Being our best

Amanda Jayne, Let’s Talk’s west Norfolk based psychotherapist and counsellor says that although we are living through difficult times, we need to remain positive.

Within the self-actualising theory there are a few key things necessary to achieve the best versions of ourselves: That we are shown unconditional positive regard from other people; we feel accepted just as we are, not judged and with no conditions. (If only people could be a little more like dogs !) Acceptance of ourselves, just as we are, which means we have to acknowledge our own ‘warts and all’ and accept them.

How many times do you think: “I’m too this . . . or too that . . . or not enough . . . ?” If we constantly beat up ourselves instead of being accepting, we are too scared to try new things or to be open to people who could enhance our life. If we can try to do the above as much as possible, we become more open to new experiences as we are not scared of being judged or ‘failing’.

We need to be able to express our emotions. It’s what links us together. When someone is able to fully express their sadness; fear or hurt, you are drawn to them, to help them, it feels good to be trusted, and part of you relates and feels comforted that others

sometimes feel the same way.

In our general social situations, we respond well to kindness, encouragement, and respect for one another. It’s that warm feeling you get when someone pays you a compliment or notices something you’ve worked hard at. That motivates us and enables us to try new things and to think that perhaps we can do or be something good or exciting, therefore propelling us toward the best version of ourselves.

Although currently things are uncertain and worrying and, to a certain extent, out of our own individual control, we can control our own immediate environment. We can be kind to the people around us, we can empathise to a degree, as we are all in the same boat, and most importantly we can try to be kind to ourselves and give ourselves every chance to become who we really are.

There are two quotes that I keep in mind through difficult times:

“It’s never too late to be what you might have been” – George Elliot.

“This too shall pass” – Hakim Sanai