

# Connect Care

## It's Time to Take Off the Mask

BY DR. ROGER HABER

When I was a child, way back when, my mother made us wear those awful store-bought Halloween costumes with the miserable plastic masks you couldn't see out of or breathe with them on.

This month let's look at a different kind of mask that might also be uncomfortable to wear—both for the wearer and those around us.

I was recently reading an article entitled, *Take the Mask Off: How to Get Real with People* from the KeenAlignment website.

The author writes, "We all have many different masks we wear. But do they actually help us? Or do they hurt our abilities to be impactful, productive, and fulfilled?"

According to this article, there are at least four reasons we mask our true selves:

- 1. Fear.** Many of us fear we won't be accepted by others. All of us have the basic need to belong. If we feel our authentic self won't be accepted by the people around us we will often hide part of our true selves.
- 2. Self-Deception.** Sometimes we might lie to ourselves to avoid facing our flaws. Sometimes we might blame others for our own shortcomings or faults, pretending we aren't responsible for our lack of discipline.



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**RALPH WALDO  
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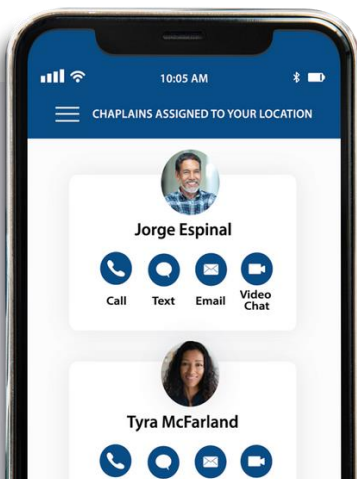
- 3. Coping Mechanisms.** Masks can also be used as coping mechanisms to hide insecurities or trauma from others, or even ourselves. These kinds of masks can serve as a survival tool to help us avoid things we perceive as threats. An example is when one can be hypervigilant about the things one says and always make sure one doesn't ruffle any feathers.
- 4. Imposter Syndrome.** This is what happens when we feel who we are isn't good enough. People suffering from Imposter Syndrome always focus on the negative. They pretend not to be angry or hurt when they are.

Wearing masks for any of these reasons is not healthy for us or our workplaces. A healthy workplace is filled with individuals who feel free and authentic in an environment that promotes authenticity. These workplaces have less stress and more satisfaction.

The writer of the article I cited above states: "Being authentic is knowing who you are, what's important to you, why it's important, and living congruently with those things. You choose to live in alignment with what you say you are."

You can talk to your chaplain about these issues. You can speak with him or her in complete confidence about what it might take to remove the mask and have more joy and passion in your work and home.

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