

Dirty

Chapter 4: Normal

People are people so why should it be, you and I should get along so awfully. So, we're different colors, and we're different creeds, and different people have different needs. It's obvious you hate me though I've done nothing wrong I never even met you so what could I have done I can't understand what makes a man hate another man Help me understand

-Depeche Mode: "People are People."

The music group Depeche Mode have several songs trying to digest the human race. The lyrics above point to confusion over why we can't get along. Do you think this search is recent? Do you think that the latest thinkers have found out something that we have never thought of before? Aristotle said around 300 BC. *At his best, man is the noblest of all animals; separated from law and justice he is the worst.* I am tired of searching for what is normal. It seems all I ever find is the worst. We humans have come along way, yet we really have so far to go. It seems impossible to figure out the human race.

In a way, my pursuit of finding myself over the last 15 years has hurt me. What I've discovered is that the original me is not accepted. People want the me they desire. I should smile more, dress better, choose better words, and on and on it goes. I need to recreate myself to fit each person I meet. That is a life's pursuit. To be all that each person needs me to be. Not! That would-be suicide and crazy. This is not a trivial pursuit. Living in the world of other people is hard work. Finding me and pleasing them is tough slugging.

Why on earth do I care what people think? Oh, are you fine with yourself? Do you straighten a tie, fix your hair, or get that resume, just right? I can't stand the thought of being the one who keeps their house pristine. Yet, I wish I could. I like my hair but a little more style would be nice. A degree might get me into an elite circle. A great car, hobby, or talent will put me in the middle of conversation. Sometimes we want to or have to be more than we are. There are those who put on a mask. They talk very fancy just to look special. I believe it would be

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exhausting and tiring to be something you're not. Yet, over and over again, we take the time to look just right. Right for who?

The pursuit of happiness. The American constitution incorporated that term probably for several reasons. One is to pursue a spiritual life. The other was to gain wealth through hard work and dedication. I wonder if many people have forgotten why they put that in a public declaration. Maybe we think it's something to be owned like the right to bear arms. Don't I have a right to be happy? It seems I don't have a right to be sad. Here is a pill for that, a diagnose, a program to fix you up. This world seems to be the pursuit of happiness gone wrong.

Do we pursue happiness with the masks we wear? Is our hair right, nails done, so that we can impress? There is certainly nothing wrong with impressing the mirror, but things can get out of hand. There is Botox, implants, and plastic surgery. There are hundreds of books that inspire, rewire, and motivate. For what? To find happiness? To make happiness? Is it really about making sure others don't have to put up with your sadness? I'm not unhappy, but I swear my family asked me to smile 16 times at dinner last night. Get over it people, I'm fine.

David Gilbert is a professor that has dedicated his career to finding the meaning of *the Pursuit of happiness*. In one New York Times article by Jon Gertner in 2003, Gilbert is quoted as saying happiness is perceived by something called "Impact Bias." It means we have intense emotion towards future things. There is the other side: where are prone to err. If you put the two together it goes like this. We think we need a new car. In the future, we finally achieve that goal. Out on the street we go roaming around in the car of our dreams. A week or two later we feel ambivalent towards the car of our dreams. It's a car, and after the first payment it's a bill too. Impact bias means we overestimated our future happiness level. People try and fulfill their

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perception of what would make them happy. The problem is that down the road our feelings and expectations always change. Circumstances change.

Kids always love to say *are we there yet*. Is that their pursuit of happiness? I know for a fact that my ex-wife has had trouble in her new marriage. Is it better than the one we had together? I'm sure she would say yes, but is it what she hoped for? Nothing is ever what you thought. In my pursuit of finding me I have realized that I'm either more than satisfied or somehow left feeling that I'm less than stellar. However, it never is exactly like I envisioned. Sometimes getting there is half the fun. It is? We do hope for a perfect future result. An anticipation that drives us to cry out every 5 minutes *are we there yet*.

Where does our pursuit of happiness come from? Personality seems to be a major component. Carlin Flora of Psychology Today wondered if we are our own worst enemy with this pursuit. Do we lack self-efficacy? She pondered if *we are in the pursuit of maladaptive perfectionism and neuroticism*. Carlin uses David Gilberts work to build a question *is it people who drive us or the mirror?* True neuroticism is extreme self-love. You could say it is extreme high standards. In many readings, I have found people achieve many things but never quite find happiness. Feeding our happiness is a goal I can assure you.

I went down this rabbit trail because normal people exist because they believe they are "the normal." Are normal people the happy people? They equally believe there are weird, crazy, and abnormal people all around them. Normal is the absence of abnormal. It is also a mean of the common. If all people smile, then it's normal. If most people sleep 8 hrs., then it's normal. Then there is the other side. Only getting 3 hrs. sleep is not normal. Kissing alligators is not the norm. I do feel that there is a silent war waged between the normal and strange. Yet, normal people love looking at the strange. Are they just curious or disgusted?

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This war has caused irreparable damage to friends and family. It causes the one kid to retreat to the back of the class. A boy with big ears to wear a toque in the summer. I had an extended family that were different. That might be normal because we all have someone in the family like that. Still, they were certainly different. There was a prostitute, pimp, and another on welfare. They are people, but in the realm of the normal it's not that simple. Our family get togethers were interesting. One group sat in the living room and another in the kitchen: never the two shall meet. Yet, here we were at Christmas, in one house, and at one gathering.

I know for a fact that one despised the other. I had heard the words weird, disheveled, and trailer trash. Justified? That my friends depend on your point of view. Depeche Mode is ringing in my ears again **“People are people so why should it be you and I should get along so awfully so, we're different colors, and we're different creeds, and different people have different needs.”** Are we different, yes? Do we think different, yes? Yet, we are people from the same human family, yes. People are people but for some reason we hate that.

I was reading this article by Peter Kramer in 2009 about what is normal. The question was asked *is anyone really well?* Kramer was pondering the validity of normal. On one hand, normal is subjective. We are special in our own way. On the flip side, some people need help. Kramer was worried that the new normal would exclude those who really have adverse problems. Sometimes we act strange because of something were allergic to. Other times it's atmosphere. He was just queasy about moving the normal parameters towards those who need help.

This article mentioned one other interesting fact. There is a movement to redefine normal by changing the classification to *dimensions*. Individuals are all normal but we live in different dimensions. I think the Matrix and Star trek would love this talk. I am frightful that what we

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consider wrong or out of the norm will have to be accepted as normal. Where does that leave murder, rape, and pedophilia? Where does that leave dementia, autism, and phobia's? Kramer's fears just might be justified.

I had to point these things out because we look at people with a judging eye. People are different than us. Sometimes it's because they are acting outside the "normal." We have to admit it. Sometimes we hate people acting outside what we consider normal. I was in a very conservative church one fine Sunday and a woman stood up and spoke for the Lord. Now I don't know if you have ever been to church but in this place, it rocked their boat. Rocked it in a bad way too. What she did was not normal. The pastoral leadership discerned her actions behind closed doors. This really ruffled feathers. After very little debate they decided that what she did was not from God. In the congregation, what she did was bang on, but it was not the norm.

Was she a crazy religious type or were the normal people flying off the handle for no reason. Part of me is arguing for the dimensions. I can't believe I just said that. She is normal? For sure this girl was a little quirky. Yet, has there ever been a quirky person that God talked to? It's weird, Moses talked to God and he glowed like pixie dust. The people stayed away from him, so he felt compelled to wear a veil. Other prophets in the Bible were loners and strange. Normal? Not in the eyes of most. Since "most" means common or normal. I guess a vast majority think the same way. If we all were classified as normal then would we think some normal people are strange?

I live with a slightly autistic girl. She is normal but not normal. Her name is Abbie and we call her Abbie-normal. This girl can't help jumping and flapping when excited. She is a little bit OCD, Asperger's, and a whole lot of something else they have not yet defined. She is certainly not normal by human standards. Still, I tell her people are picky about behavior and she

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is normal enough. A girl from the 5th dimension I guess. Abbie is smart and quirky all rolled into one.

The tough part is her classification. Any program we took her to for help was greeted by skeptics. Her autism was met with classification problems. She looks normal and that was a big problem. One job turned her down because she did not look the part. She has no physical disability. Her speech and ability to function is normal. However, her social skills and amazing ability to daydream on the spot is not normal. Where does that leave these people. If we paint them in a certain dimension, then are there levels of this new normal?

It comes back to how we see people. We look at people's actions and critique or judge them. Oh, yes we do. If a woman got on a bus backwards we would notice. If a man bucked like a chicken in KFC we would notice. A fine young student is reading a book at Starbucks. We wouldn't give him a glance unless he was wearing a Jewish cap, bunny ears, or football helmet. The norm is what most people do or wouldn't do. I'm not Jewish but I'd like one of those caps. I'm going bald in a certain spot. It would be perfect. I'm sure someone in my family would think I'm losing it if I showed up in that thing. Why? It's not what I've done in the past. I'm not Jewish. It's not normal for me. Maybe they wouldn't try it, but I would.

I feel dirty because normal people avoid me. They tell me to be different, but not different than them. Usually they don't say it to my face. No, it's the averting of the eyes when we talk. It's the strained smiles when we meet. It's the clicks of family at a Sunday meal that avoid the other clicks at all costs. They think I can't tell. They think they have successfully avoided me. No, I leave feeling dirty. I leave wishing I fit in.

If I looked up the numbers on depression, there all over the map. Depending what dimension, you find yourself in. Some have cautioned that we are diagnosing people for

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depression for the wrong reasons. There is the pursuit of happiness and there is the pursuit of acceptance. Why on earth do I want you to accept me? In a way, I feel we are really in a pursuit to be normal. I wonder if Adam and Eve just wanted to be more than they were. The musician Plumb sings there is a God shaped hole in all of us. Is that it? If normal was God, then that's what they wanted too. To insert that final piece to be just like him. To be more than they were?

Are we made less than complete so that we get off our butts and search for meaning? For me, I believe it. There is no logical reason we search for happiness. Pumba in the Lion King said *home is where your rump rests*. It's quite normal to feel comfortable. Resting our rump in a place that is or feels like home that's a good thing. There's nothing wrong with the pursuit of happiness. There is a danger in pursuing being normal. One of the Hitler agendas was trying to make the perfect race. There are bands of people that think their culture or their race is normal. Diversity and the common complete us. We are more than just one type or one way.

What would happen if we were all normal? What would happen if we were all complete? I suspect there would be longer naps, more holidays, and the pursuit of nothing. My autistic daughter is funny. One day I told her I could make her move magically. She said "no you can't." I opened all the cupboards in the kitchen and left the room. Within 30 seconds I heard the cupboards closing. I gave her meaning because she had to close them. It was her nature. I suspect it's our nature to fill a hole in our lives, close the doors, and find the answers.

Ok, then why do normal people detest the abnormal. Why do they want the strange in locked rooms, cages, and in circuses? If they are complete, then why be bothered with the uncomplete? I suspect it comes back to the masks we wear. The mask covers the hole in each of us. Some fine people can't stand the thought of exposing what is missing. They don't want to pursue themselves. Jealousy, laziness, and apathy might be the answer. They say we use more

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muscles to smile than frown. We naturally frown with relaxed facial muscles. It takes effort to be happy. It takes strength to pursuit completeness. It's possible the normal are lazy.

In a way, I'm kidding. Normal does not have to be lazy. Yet, maybe I've found a partial solution. The out of the box thinkers just never stop. Is it that what drives us crazy? They never quit the pursuit of happiness. They think far beyond the normal. It's like closing kitchen doors. They just have to. If you say *no* they have to say *yes*. If you say *don't* then they have to say *I must*. There is a funny story of a kid that was rambunctious. His mother made him sit down and reflect on his actions. Sometime later she asked him if he was sorry. He said yes, but he was standing up on the inside. That's it with the abnormal. They just can't do it your way.

I wish people would accept me as I am. I surly try and accept you as an individual. This is hard stuff. Before I go to work each day I pray I shut my mouth, do my job, and stay invisible. Almost every evening I travel home in repentance for opening my mouth, being different, and standing up on the inside. What is it with me. I just can't help it. There must be a diagnosis or clinical term for my condition? Am I nuts, crazy, abnormal, or am I in pursuit of happiness.

Regardless if you believe in a God or not, you must admit there is a hole or void of incompleteness within us. A candle lights up the room but a bulb works better. A log fire heats a stove but a microwave is more effective. A horse works but a Ferrari is faster. One degree is never enough for the life time student. One hiking trail is never enough for the naturalist. An extreme sport is never achieved. There is always one more mountain, cave, or obstacle course to conquer. There is something within us to finish. Yet, equally there is something in us to go a step beyond. Those feelings drive some of us insane.

There is the participation award. As a little boy, I hated the kid who always won. They went home with all the red ribbons and I had last place white ones. These special students were

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gifted in sport beyond me. I love sport but I'm not Tom Brady or Wayne Gretzky. Some well-meaning smuck decided I needed love. They tried to give all of us participation awards instead of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place. Over time I have read studies on achievement. We strive because we don't have. Marks go down when we all pass. There has to be a winner. Are the normal people the participation winners? Does the abnormal person hate to lose?

To be fair, normal is the common ground. To be fair, abnormal people win far more often. Why? It's because they find a way. They hate to lose. Their standing up on the inside. However, their inside must get outside. In Star Trek Captain Kirk is admired for several things. The way he talks, his looks, and his ability to think outside the box. There is a famous incident where he takes the final test of a starship captain: the Kobayashi Maru. This test is a no win scenario. Now for us, not so normal people, this is candy. An insane test that has no answer is inconceivable, but extremely tasty. It's like asking a person in a round room to pee in a corner. It isn't happening. The other view is the standing up on the inside part. Abnormal people have to beat the impossible.

Captain Kirk said he did not believe in no win situations. There was always a chance. So, he is the only one student who beat it. How could he do that? He changed the rules. He reprogramed the game to win behind the academy's back. He lost and won all at the same time. The school reprimanded him for cheating but admired him for ingenuity. Kirk is one of those who are outside the norm. They think outside the box. These people discover places where no man or woman has gone before.

Sir Winston Churchill was made for that moment in World War 2. He was the right guy in the right moment. Why? Because big Germany should have kicked the British ass in the war. Churchill thought totally outside of the Hitler box. I have read time after time that Hitler was

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enraged at the failures to capture that stupid British island. Maybe there are no winless situations.

Funny as it is, I bet Hitler called Churchill a nut. I bet Churchill called Hitler a nut. In private they have admired their adversary. Yet, not in public. Maybe chastising ingenuity in public is a front for jealousy? There is something behind public shaming.

I feel that is it in a nutshell with the secret war between the normal and abnormal. In public, we want people to think we love being normal. We can't stand abnormalities. At one Christmas dinner, I have one relative who hates a lot of people and a bunch of things. During one of those moments he disappeared. Everyone wondered what happened. I bet he had to leave or explode. There was no way in public he was going to take off his mask. Deep inside I bet he was jealous because he refused to let himself be free of his view on the normal. I can't imagine how terrible his life is on the inside. There is something behind private shaming too.

I wonder if psychologists are trying to create a scenario where the abnormal look normal. All we will have are normal dimensions. Clinical abnormalities mean we have to admit some are different. That is stressing, hard work, and the undiscovered territory. There are no participation medals in that place. For some, that is too much work. For others, maybe their more like Kirk than they care to admit. Is it a desire of most to change the game? If you don't fit, then change the shape of the hole. The pursuit of happiness? Yet, I feel people run from changing the game far too often.

I guess utopia is common ground. A place where racism, hatred, and the abnormal don't exist. Yet, on TV we see the longings of our hearts. What is popular? Hero's with strange abilities. *The Avengers*, meta humans in *The Flash*, and *Hawaii 5-0*. Wait a minute *Hawaii 5-0* does not fit that? Yes, it does because we have a hero with strange behavior, out of the norm thinking, and unorthodox ways. It's *Sesame Street* all over again. Every show is singing "one of

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these things is not like the other.” In the end, we have the government or secret agencies trying to crush the abnormal. To create a common place: utopia. A place called normal.

The book 1984 was a great look into the evolution of government. It a story about flatlining history. Creating a monotone society. It was the eradication of individuals and accomplishments. The other day I saw a post that was putting that book in the non-fiction section. Have we become the fantasy of George Orwell? It’s funny but if he were alive we might honor him as the father of our big government. In many ways, we are there. I saw on TV the other day that someone is upset that their Jedi temple is not considered a religion. Do they honor George Lucas? Why are guys named George so famous? Why is there a desire to take the absurd and make it normal?

I am reading a book called “Wild” written by Cheryl Strayed. She was an unfulfilled woman who decided to hike the Pacific Crest Trail all by herself. Of course, she found herself out there. The desert has a way of doing that to people. She was different, strange, quirky, and normal all rolled into one. One day she was approached by a man who was looking to interview Hobo’s. She told him she was not a Hobo. He ignored her plea. He continued to admire a female Hobo. Cheryl kept on insisting and so did the reporter. In the end, they agreed to disagree. Afterwards Ms. Strayed realized she looked and acted the part of a Hobo. She entered the trip with no home, job and she looked outright disheveled. Yet, she desired to be what’s on the inside more than the outside. She looked hobo but was searching for something normal.

That is, it in a nut shell. We wear masks to look normal. We tell tales to look normal. We create dimensions to look normal. I think it comes down to what Jon Gertner said in the Beginning of his article about David Gilbert. (happiness professor). **“If Daniel Gilbert is right, then you are wrong. That is to say, if Daniel Gilbert is right.”** That is in response to Gilbert

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asking *if we are all not well*. It's possible we are all not well. Maybe what is on your inside is standing up. Maybe we need to let it out. What if you can't stand the abnormal because you want to be one of them but don't have the balls. What if being abnormal is secretly in.

In the last chapter I mentioned a man who believed in repressing gay rights. He was caught in a gay relationship. We are strange creatures. I read an article about being human. They tried hard to place humans within the animal kingdom. I found it interesting that smart people make it a life's pursuit to prove we ascended from monkeys or amebae's. They find it ridicules to believe we come from a divine creation. Who is more nuts? Three hundred years ago, is the candle or the lightbulb nuts? In those days believing God created us was considered normal. Today believing in God is nuts. Our pursuit of normal happiness just might be nuts.

Usually bashing those you hate means they reflect your heart in a mirror. There's just too much pride, narcist, and self-loathing in you to admit it. Why pursue the destruction of others to find happiness? Is that your pursuit. Is evolving from apes better than devolving from a God? I'd rather have divine descendants than monkey ones personally. However, at our family dinners I think I know which ones I come from. Maybe accepting a person as they are is a novel idea.

Seeking your inner self is freedom. I said at the beginning that I am on a mission to find me. One December 18, 1998 I sat on the couch listening to my ex-wife tell me she did not love me anymore and I had to leave. Leave? Where would I go? Days later I'm sitting in the empty basement of my parents still pondering where to go. If it's where my rump is resting that's just not good enough. Then came the mirror. I looked into the face of a broken man. A man? Gee, I don't even know if I was male, smart, cute, funny, successful, or a disaster. Who was I?

It's stunning what I was on the days prior to December 18, 1998. I was slightly more female. I wore spandex doing aerobics. I cleaned house, and raised the children during the day.

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Sounds like a 1950's house wife minus the spandex. It's not about gender traits. I never knew or pursued me. It was all about them. When "them" said go away, I was left with me. That person I never knew. I was a house wife. Strangely enough other women said they would love that in a man, yet each woman I met thought I was weird and gay. Gay is not weird but trying to be a heterosexual gay guy is.

It came back to me every time: who am I? The pursuit of me is my pursuit of happiness. Those who deem themselves normal find that I'm abnormal. I get that a lot. I'm happier now because I don't care what they think. My normal is their abnormal. Is there still tugs on the heart strings to fit in? Yes, but the tug used to be a pull. I used to let them push. I don't anymore. Don't ever tell me I can't, should not, or will not. I'm the strange, crazy, abnormal, and dirty. I am everything you haven't had the strength to be. I don't need to judge others. I don't need to pick on people's quirks. I can be comfortable in the mirror. I just might be afraid to be normal. I am your worst nightmare because I always think outside the box. I am me, and don't you forget that.

G Campbell Morgan is a famous preacher of the early 1900's. He said in regards to the heart "revolution not evolution." I think Darwin got it wrong. The normal so called people got it wrong. Evolved from monkeys? The more people I meet the more I am convinced we already know who we are. We just stubbornly refuse to let it out. We want to hide that person behind a mask. We only show certain parts of us in a fishbowl we display. Why is it that some people lash out? They are becoming the very thing they hated? It's because we tend to bar the freedom of being who we truly are. It's time for a heart revolution.

Maybe it's time to realize that the reason we attack the abnormal is because it's our fear of ourselves. Waiting on evolution will take more than a lifetime. There are so many people I

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meet that say those horrible words “when I.” When I what? When I’m good I’ll go to church.

When I’m older I’ll travel. When I’m richer I’ll be happy. When my boat comes in. When, when, when. Evolution might require a comet crashing down. It might involve circumstances out of your control. It might involve you walking out of the water as a fish and turning into a person. Evolution is a ridicules proposition.

Revolution is a different cat. That might involve you getting out of your box, comfort zone, and house. It might you involve trying something new. It might involve being brave. Revolution is mirror work. It’s reaching inside and pulling it out. It is accepting you as you really are. I suspect that Bruce Jenner has turned into Caitlyn Jenner because he wants the inside to be the outside. I suspect that he has tried to be evolution instead of revolution. I fear he won’t last long in his new form because it’s not the whole Bruce, He won’t find happiness in changing genders. There is a ton more to him than just that.

Revolution means trying. It means using energy to make a difference in you. How do you embrace the person you are? I have written a book called Reset. In it I give a guide to discovering you. Check it out on my website

<http://faithcomesalive.ca/summer%20series%20page.htm>. The story of you is an ongoing written work. You could say evolution. I think it’s more about revolution because of the way people explode. People lash out at society. They yell at a wife or kids. They fight the law. In every case there is something inside boiling. Is it possible it’s just you. Maybe you hate where your rump is resting.

I pretend to be an adult in the day time

I am comfortable with a normal life. I like working, living, and the paying bills game. It is challenging and fun. It’s hard and lonely sometimes, but it is life. Occasionally I like to bust it

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up and do things differently. I go on a trip or pay a bill early. Normal is safe but it's boring.

Boring makes people wander and ponder. We begin to drift into the what if or woulda, coulda, shoulda dimension. When you let your hold, hold you back then trouble comes. Have your normal but embrace the abnormal too. It's not about change to be normal but exploration to be different.

So many think it's about changing a spouse. Changing a job. That might happen, but let that happen because they don't want you rather than you not wanting them. If there is love in a marriage, then they will love your revolution. Watching a spouse become all they were meant to be is awesome. A job can use your talents. Holding back just might be what frustrated them most about you. Many friendships are fake because we only let them see the masks. True friendship accepts people for who they truly are. Good friends just might want to go on a revolution with you. Be a leader of revolution.

Finally, I want to break your mold. You are a one of a kind but do we see that? Cheryl Stayed walked the Pacific Crest Trail to find herself. In the end, she missed family and missed life. Her walk began a revolution. Her "should" write a book became "I did" write a book. I could end this chapter by saying that normal is good. Abnormal is good. Both of these needs to be complimentary to each other. They need to be friends and not enemies. Yet, I know how hard we get inside when we resist. This next chapter is a warning about getting hard. You don't need that and neither do others. Talking about the pitfalls of hatred, stubbornness, and resistance is needed. Now let's go there.