



Dr Pete Stebbins PhD

WELLBEING QUICKSTART

True Self or Survival Self

Which One Is Stronger?

We are happiest and most fulfilled when we are living a life that honours our 'true self' – our deepest sense of identity, our inherent nature. Yet many people do not live their lives according to their 'true self' but rather according to their 'survival self' – a pattern which often begins early in life to protect us from physical and emotional danger.

Instead of switching back to our 'true self' after the danger is over, we keep our 'survival self' switched on to prevent further danger. This heightened state of tension also allows us to work faster and harder – achieving goals that were socially useful (regardless of whether they aligned with the needs of our 'true self'). We then rinse and repeat this pattern with success for many years until...

...Until the muscles of our 'survival self' have become so strong that they almost entirely over-take our self-identity and we live in a hyper-achieving, pro-social, hyper-aroused way – using exercise, stimulants, alcohol and constant self-improvement and goal setting to make ourselves functional and adaptable in society...

...Until the neurochemistry of living in a constant state of 'survival' thoroughly and completely wears our bodies out – strange musculo-skeletal problems, unexpected non-communicable diseases, extended recovery and complications from minor illnesses...

...Until the muscles of our 'true self' have become so weak and atrophied through lack of use and lost connection that a mysterious discomfort and sadness arises within us that just won't go away...

What if we could somehow strengthen the muscles of our 'true self' and enable them to become the dominant drivers in our lives? What if we could continue to appreciate and value our 'survival self' but give it a rest from needing to dominate all our decisions and life patterns?

This is the deep work you do in therapy which can be easily visualised in the diagram as the journey from B.T. to A.T. Reach out if you'd like to know more!

