

we have a saying in the gym - it's not mean if its true.

we become who we hang around. on a subtle level, the people with whom we spend the most time create our expectations, our normal - water seeks its own level. more actively the people we care about shape us. they challenge us, they pay attention and ask questions. they have expectations.

there is a balance to be sought, but in general too many social relationships tend towards acceptance rather than challenge. people (for the most part) are quick to silently accept bullshit excuses and, after long enough, we start to believe the same stupid, made-up reasons we hide behind - we convince ourselves to stay the same. too many excuses only seem valid because they continue to go unchallenged. there is a value in negativity, in challenge. there is a value in learning to defend yourself, your ideas. there is also value in learning to accept being called out. to be thankful for the friend who points out your weakness, the crack in your argument. in the art world, it is called a crit. a critique. stand before your peers, display your work, and hold on because you are about to be questioned, challenged, and torn apart. it can get ugly. tears and broken friendships - but in the end you know more...

knowledge, and the will to act on it. encouragement as well as challenge. a group of peers who expect you to improve every day. friends who will not accept half measures or mediocrity. the discussion has been going on in the media - about how easy it is to only see stories that reinforce your current beliefs. how many of us seek challenge in our social circles? or even tolerate it? how many people have you heard make the claim that they are done with negative people? that they will not allow negativity in their life? there are very few things in life that are one dimensional. there is a reason the most common answer i give people is "it depends". there are many forms of negativity, and learning to listen, learning to accept challenge (and challenge in return) can make us all better.

we need negativity. we need critics. there is no reason life should be easy. it should be valuable. it should be worth it. encouragement is nice, *at the beginning*. once the goal matures from "start" to "improve" it becomes apparent that positive reinforcement is an emotional asset and (mostly) a tactical waste. positive reinforcement gives us precious little information. challenge, however... negativity will show us how we are weak. misplaced negativity will show us the agenda of our attacker. it is all information, and is valuable - if we use it.

edit. remove. replace. be aware of your surroundings and of their effect on you. have an agenda. reinforce said agenda in every facet of your life. learn your social value. learn your cost. learn to say no. no. NO. some of you need to learn to be selfish. some of you need to pull your head out of your ass. all of us need more people to tell us which camp we are in at any particular moment.

here is a new years resolution i can get behind - defend yourself.



*the weight never lies. challenge and honesty. the opportunity to improve. all it requires is the willingness to meet it half way. to listen. and to offer challenge in return.*