

*pretend vs. being real***REALITY CHECK** 

Everyone pretends at some time or another. We convince ourselves that things are “fine” when they are obviously a mess. We are friendly with people we don’t really like. We act as if we are listening when our minds are somewhere else. This allows us to avoid conflict, fit in, win approval, be liked or loved, or not be humiliated. Pretending is the cousin to denial that allows us to cope or postpone dealing with uncomfortable situations.

In my view, there are three levels of pretending – Denial, Deal Making and Resignation.

**It Ain’t Just a River in Egypt**

People in denial may not be aware they are pretending. I know I’m in denial when I start sulking. I’m feeling sorry for myself and don’t even realize I’m doing it. This could go on for days, weeks, months or even (heaven forbid) years. Fortunately I have a trusted friend who is willing to point out my pity party, pull the plug on my denial and help me see that I have options. Then I can either adjust my attitude and fix the situation, or take my denial to the next level.

**Let’s Make a Deal**

In deal making we admit that things are bad, but we pretend they will get better if ... and we fill in the blank. We convince ourselves that *IF* this changes (on its own?), or we do that (soon, very soon) *THEN* everything will be fine. I am pretty good at playing this game. For example, I’ve stayed in dead end jobs thinking (hoping, praying) if I did it well I would be rewarded and things would be better. (What I should’ve done is taken a chance on what was behind door number two.)

**Please Accept My Resignation**

This is the lowest level of all. When we resign ourselves to the current situation, it means we have lost all hope, given up and given in. We have decided there is nothing better out there, and that we’ll learn to live with our lot. Unfortunately, most of us have a friend staying in a bad situation because she doesn’t think she has other options. Someone needs to tell her it is...

**...Time to Get Real**

The first step is to become aware of what we pretend and make a conscious decision to change. When we alter the way we see ourselves and our situation, we can control how we act, react and communicate with others.

Being real is liberating. The truth really can set us free. When we are honest with ourselves we literally feel lighter because we have shed a burden. Now people will know what we are thinking, feeling and where we stand. They will trust us and we will sleep better at night

When we are being real, we own our reality and our current situation. We accept responsibility for our thoughts, feelings, relationships, behaviors and our attitudes.

When you think about it, the core of all our relationships is the “REALNESS” we share with our closest friends, loved ones and most trusted co-workers. ●

~GINA CROWLEY  
LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

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