

HOW DOES YOUR PSYCHOLOGICAL GARDEN GROW?

BY MELANIE YOUNGMAN



DO ALL 'WEEDS' REQUIRE REMOVAL?

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I was in my garden at the weekend, enjoying some sunshine when I noticed some huge weeds which seemed to have appeared from nowhere! I had been gardening only a few days before, could they have been there the whole time and I had not noticed, or had they sprouted up and grown at lightning speed?! Thinking about the weeds got me wondering about what the definition of a "weed" is. A weed is generally considered to be something which is undesirable or a plant growing in the wrong place.

What differentiates between a weed and a flower is location. Pondering this got me thinking about my inner garden and my 'psychological weeds'. How often do you invest time, feeling as though you are getting your life in order only to find yourself repeating an unhealthy pattern of behaviour that you thought you had resolved? Or have you spent time trying to kick an annoying habit only to realise that you have replaced it with another unhealthy one? Or perhaps you decide to end a relationship with someone whom you feel brings out the worst in you, only to find the same storyline being re-enacted with someone else?

These psychological re-enactments or 'weeds' can be frustrating, but they can also act as a call to action, indicating to us that there is perhaps some work to be undertaken in this area.

Psychological weeds grow in exactly the same fashion as weeds in our actual garden. We can ignore/avoid them until they become a familiar fixture in our inner garden that we fail to notice them or we attempt to remove them but underestimate the depth at which they have taken root that it's not long before they re-appear again.

Or there is also the option of allowing them to remain and live alongside them in 'weedy' harmony! Removing psychological (and actual) weeds can be an incredibly difficult job depending on the resistance of the weed.

Whether we choose to classify something as a 'weed' or as a plant is up to us as one person's weed is another person's wild flower. Is it necessary to remove all weeds? I recently discovered that the lovely plant with little pink flowers that I had been nurturing in my flower beds was Lamium (also known as dead nettle) which is a common garden weed which I had been helping to grow for quite some time! This is a weed which I will be allowing to stay as it's pretty and not causing any disruption (for now at least). However, just because I have given the Lamium permission to stay for now, doesn't mean that I won't consider removing it if its presence begins to have a detrimental effect on the surrounding plants. Habits/patterns of behaviour are only considered to be problematic when they become disruptive in our lives. For example: one of my psychological weeds is procrastination. Sometimes I find it helpful as putting things off enables me to focus on the things I enjoy doing and factor in some 'me time'. There are other occasions when my tendency to procrastinate has resulted in paying a bill late or missing a work deadline. So, like the dead nettle in my garden, I allow this weed to stay as its benefits counterbalance the disadvantages.

It's very easy to remain focussed on one area of your psychological garden whilst other areas can remain neglected and begin to grow out of control. The question we really need to ask ourselves when it comes to identifying our psychological weeds is: how is this serving me? If the disadvantages outweigh the benefits, it is perhaps time to consider some de-weeding. Taking the time to re-evaluate what is serving us and identifying what no longer does on a regular basis, is what I believe, key to a healthy, thriving psychological garden.