

I don't want to be
nice, i want to be me

[Philosophy](#), [Personal Philosophy](#)



I can actually remember the first time it happened. I was about six years old and in a class with a bunch of kids my age. Class was getting out of hand. The kids weren't concentrating. They were antsy. Fidgety. Loudly whispering behind their hands. Our teacher, after shushing us half a dozen times as she tried to keep our focus on the task at hand, finally gave up and informed us that we could have free time for the next fifteen minutes. Chaos broke loose. Kids bolted up from their chairs. Everyone was talking at once, giggling, playing games, and just generally wreaking havoc. And then there was me. I sat quietly in my chair. I finished the activity and then worked on a craft, completely content. I didn't associate what I was doing with positive behavior; I just had no desire to be loud and crazy. I was a shy, quiet, reserved little girl who was happier playing by herself. Simple as that.

As parents started to arrive, our frazzled teacher helped each kid find his or her crafts and finished activity sheets and happily handed the chattering children over with a half-hearted smile. But when my mother arrived, my teacher beamed. "Your daughter is so amazing to have in class. So good. So helpful," she gushed. "She's a jewel. Such a sweet, nice little girl." And just like that, there it was: my first "nice." Whether or not I knew it at the time, a standard had been set for my future behavior. And although my teacher probably didn't mean it in this way, my young brain interpreted her praise as telling me that the reason I was a "jewel" was because I was nice. After all, nice girls were good and helpful, and that was how she had described me. Therefore, I reasoned, I wasn't lovable and nice. I was lovable because I was nice. And if I wanted to please the adults around me, I would have to continue to be nice. So that's what I did. As the years passed, I became well-

trained in the art of nice. It wasn't all intentional. Especially at first. As much as I adored praise, I was just a good kid, and too shy and scared to dare be anything but nice. Being nice wasn't so much a choice as a given.

So I grew up, and nice continued to follow on my heels. In the beginning I never felt hemmed in by nice. Nice was, well, nice. It got me positive reinforcement from adult role models. So I stayed inside the lines. I put others first. I complimented people. I gave good advice. I bolstered others' self-esteem. I laughed at my friends' jokes even when they weren't that funny. And slowly, over time, people learned to expect niceness from me. They expected me to have a smile on my face, to stay inside the lines, to do what I was told. Not surprisingly, they expected me to be the girl I had told them I was. Which would have been fine - if I was that girl. But, unfortunately, I was not. Somewhere along the way, nice changed. Nice stopped being a choice and became a necessity so others wouldn't be disappointed in me. A necessity so no one would ever see me come undone, so no one would dislike or reject me, so I would never fail. Nice stopped being something I participated in and started being a mask I wore, even when I didn't feel like putting it on. Nice became a curtain I hid my real feelings behind, an acceptable way for me to embrace denial. Nice became an excuse so I wouldn't have to stand up for myself. Nice became a lie, and I became a liar. And I still am. The truth is, most days I can't wait to get home to shed my mask of nice so I can breathe again. I've trained myself well over the years. I know how to smile and stuff it when I'm in the middle of a hard situation, and then come home and punch a pillow until my true feelings are relieved. I know how to be nice, at least while other people can see. The only

problem is, I'm forgetting how to be me. People rarely see the Real Me, because the Real Me is messy. She's illogical. She gets hurt and then cries about it in the shower. She's terrible at making decisions. She doesn't clean her room as often as she should. She loves God but often doesn't want to go to church and doesn't read her Bible very much. She takes things personally, even when she knows she shouldn't. She's scared of everything. She hates being told what to do. She has a temper. She gets irritable and snaps at people. She very rarely sets her alarm and sleeps in way too often. And every few months she has a full-on emotional breakdown where she stuffs her face with comfort food and lies around watching TV despite the cripplingly long to-do list hanging over her head. Honestly, can you blame me for preferring the Nice Me? Nice Me takes responsibility for her actions. She's accomplished and put-together. She's happy and well-adjusted. She charms everyone - peers and adults - effortlessly. She's funny. She's intelligent and can communicate her ideas and opinions with poise and grace. She never makes a bad judgment call. She's a good listener and always puts others' concerns before hers. She never has problems. She's never broken. And she's super-easy to get to know, 'cause how much is there to learn about a piece of cardboard? Oh, and did I mention she's fake? The other day, a dear friend of mine and I were having a chat. After giving a brief, shallow summation of my current life experiences (i. e. " Sinclair, transferring soon, applying to colleges, writing, working at library," [insert funny anecdote here], laugh a little, change the subject before she asks detailed questions and realizes what a wreck I actually am), I asked her, " So what have you been up to lately? What's new?" She smiled politely and

started rattling off a similar spiel about school and work and vague inanities. And then I stopped her. A sudden inner desire to stop playing these silly games prompted me to say, “ No, really. Honestly. What’s going on with you?” Then she told me the truth. It turns out she was going through a really tough time. She told me about it with a smile on her face. How crazy is that? And I smiled back. We literally didn’t know what else to do. I don’t think either of us were prepared for her honesty, or my insistence on it. After she finished, I opened and shut my mouth a few times before I could come up with a response. Because sometimes nice just doesn’t work. Sometimes nice has no place in a conversation between friends. And what are nice girls supposed to do then? I chose to tell the truth. “ It’s like we’re living a double life,” I said. And she nodded. That’s exactly what it’s like. And to be honest, I think it’s time to stop. So here’s the truth. No tricks. No distractions. No excuses. Just the truth. Without all the sugarcoating we nice girls are famous for. I hate being nice. I hate feeling guilty every time I want to confront someone, however respectfully I do it. I hate feeling like I’m failing if I don’t measure up to the nice-girl standards. I hate feeling like I have to cover up any hint of weakness and real problems in my life. I hate that I water myself down to fit in. I hate that nice has become my ball and chain. I hate that I am surrounded by girls with a thousand different personalities who somehow all feel the need to bow down and worship the altar of niceness. And above all, I hate feeling terrified that the world will find out the truth. I am not a nice girl. And I like it that way.

I am a human being. I have ups and downs, broken places. I have scars and meltdowns. I have faults – not just quirky, silly ones I can laugh off. Real

faults deep within me that plant seeds of doubt in my heart about my worth. I have lazy days. I have lazy weeks. I can be irresponsible, petty, stubborn, and manipulative. There are things about myself that I truly hate. And perhaps worst of all, I want you to accept me so badly that I am willing to fake a nice persona. I am willing to compromise my integrity to be well-liked. But at the end of the day, I don't like that nice persona. I don't want to be her. I resent having to pretend that that small sliver of my personality is my entire identity. I like being the way I am. My close friends call me "trail mix" - a combination of sweet and salty. I like that. I never want to be just a bag of M&Ms. I want to be a good, strong, loving person. I want to be kind but assertive. I don't want to be a nice girl anymore. I want to be the best version of myself, not the nicest. I am done with being nice. It's time to try being me instead.