

## We are more connected than you think

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Are we individuals, or vital parts of the bigger picture? Humans are, right from birth, encouraged to be individuals and let our unique qualities shine. We are told to 'be who we are.' And yet our society and its rules and regulations, often don't encourage dancing to our own beat. In fact, our education system, bureaucratic system and most 'workplace guidelines' all demand that we conform, follow and obey. I found this to be especially true in teaching our kids to write. Given my talents, I often help my kids with their homework and tweaking their reports and essays. Surprisingly, teachers have mentioned they lack proper grammar, sentence structure, and don't follow the formula. What? In review of proper APA, MLA and M-O-U-S-E formats, yes, there is a certain structure. But alas, this iron-clad format actually discourages originality and individual creativity. Teaching someone to write a properly formatted paragraph does not teach them how to write, or express themselves. I am quite dismayed at the system. Toss in non-descript words like 'rubric' and the fun of it all disappears. In helping our kids with their assignments, I found references to articles that were written decades ago. Are there are no current papers, documents or articles available to teachers that they have to rely on 'course outlines' from 10 years ago? It is to wonder. I have three children, who all went to the same high school, in three different class 'generations.' And yet, the exact same assignments, with the exact same wording, appear time and again. Where is the effort to change things up? Where is the emphasis on individuality, creativity and self-expression? Why are our methods not evolving to reflect the changes in society and personal development? In this day and age, one could argue that individuality implies equality. If we're all equal, can we be unique? Throughout my high school and college lives, I was 'unique.' I was expressive and shared my sense of humour. To this day, those who know me would agree that I am not a mindless follower, someone who merely accepts things as they are. I accept and admire people because of our differences and unique take on life. I'm still not shy about sharing my sometimes odd sense of humour. I love to laugh. 'A day without laughter is like a day without sunshine!' Let's expand on this and espouse on humankind's individuality or sameness. In 'Karma: A Yogi's Guide to Crafting Your Destiny,' the author contends that 'individuality is a myth. It is an idea, not an existential reality.' You are inseparably linked to the rest of this universe. Your body already knows that this is part of a great molecular dance of the cosmos. Your mind, however, believes otherwise; it is convinced it is a limited entity. Therefore, any volition based on this limited understanding goes against the fundamental design of the source of creation. Any action that is impelled by such shortsighted and narrow volition invariably means karma. The textbook definition of karma is the sum of a person's actions in this and previous states of existence, viewed as deciding their fate in future existences. The whole idea of reincarnation is way too complex to explore here. But let's just go with the flow for a bit. Most of us would agree that humans possess certain types of energy that we can't fully explain. Science tells us our brains process electrical signals at an unbelievable rate, and those same impulses are sent throughout our bodies to carry out all of our functions. But we can't pinpoint our auras and our spiritual energy. We can't explain intuition, instinct, our soul, a healing touch or even positive vibes. Are they real? They're as real as anything, and as real as we feel them to be. Once I reached the age of relative wisdom, I began looking at life and people a bit differently. I now see people as unique parts of the whole. Each one of us has something to share, impart, pass on. Each one of us has the capability of not only touching other lives, but impacting them. Tell me that's not powerful! It's a domino effect. Just like our ancestors, knowledge gained is knowledge shared. The more we give, the more we receive. The search for 'karma' and the 'greater whole' can also take us into outer space. We are all part of the cosmos, in that we contain parts of elements, compounds and atoms that abound in the universe. These things have been floating around since time began, and now reside within us. Let's delve into our basic building blocks - DNA. Every single living organism on the planet has DNA. Our bodies are made up of millions of genetic building blocks (base pairs), that make up our physical anatomy. There are about 3 billion genome base pairs that make human beings about 99.9% similar to the other human strangers around us. There goes our individuality! However, recent research has uncovered the fact that our closest relatives - chimpanzees - are nearly 98.8% similar to humans genetically. In addition to this, cats are about 90% similar and even honey bees share 44% of our DNA. Why would humans share 50% of our DNA with trees, and 45% with cabbages? The fact we share anything at all is not only fascinating, but divine. Individuals, or part of the whole? All the more reason to unite, work together, love and share our gifts.

