THE ICEBERG, THE IMAGE AND THE COST OF HIDING YOURSELF

Many of us live our lives as if we are icebergs, floating aimlessly in the sea of life and largely submerged. We hide most of ourselves, especially our most vulnerable places, below “the waterline.” Like a typical iceberg, we show only about 10% of ourselves, the part above the water. For the purpose of this discussion, let’s call this 10% our “image.”

There is nothing wrong with having an image. We all do. Our image is the way in which we choose to represent ourselves to those around us and is often tied to the things we do. For students, there are many choices, from “jock” to “class clown” to “trouble-maker” to “shy kid” to “nerd” to “skater” to “cheerleader,” to “emo” and many, many more titles. Adults have their own versions, often tied to their jobs - teacher, parent, administrator, coach, etc. The problem is not that we have an image. The problem lies in the way many of us pretend that our image is ALL that we are, leaving the other roughly 90% of us hidden beneath “the waterline.”

We are so afraid of being hurt or judged that we often would rather suffer in our “comfort zone” (or in our image) - than to take a risk and be honest about who we really are - our hopes, our dreams, our fears, our disappointments, our joys, and the multitude of other parts of our inner-lives. The cost of this internalization is that much of who we are and what we experience as human beings is missed.

For the individual, taking the risk to share more of who we really are - underneath “the waterline” – deepens our relationships and builds intimacy through genuine connection. It also helps us find REAL FREEDOM -beyond the freedom to eat fast food or wear the labels we want on our clothes. We get to experience the freedom to be ourselves, to embrace our full humanity and to live our lives 100% fully alive.