



What is preventing us from living BATHO PELE?

Lydia Hoyland* argues that public servants ought to look at the psychological barriers stopping Batho Pele from becoming a reality



Many South Africans of all walks of life have already experienced the real liberation that takes place when you gain access to old memories.

The deep-seated meaning of both Ubuntu and *Batho Pele* strikes to the very core of most South Africans. This is not something to be taken lightly; it speaks to the heart and soul of who we are striving to be. Or does it? When we step back and look at ourselves, at our own lives and how this relates to everyone else within our society, do we really see someone and something that we can be proud of? Do we place the needs and aspirations of the people, of Ubuntu, first? Or is our immediate deep-seated response one of "What is in this for me?" Is our own sense of self so depleted that everything becomes about "I" and no longer about "Us"? Why are we failing both ourselves and the next generations?

Too defensive

At the heart of this is the inability many people have dealing with the flow of emotional responses that get triggered within the body. Often we look for others to blame for the way we are feeling, in some cases fearing that events in our own past will come back to haunt and possibly control us. We build wall after wall of defensive mechanisms around ourselves to keep us safe from the deep-seated emotions we fear and avoid. We start to use fear, abuse, rage and a host of other

uncontrolled emotions as weapons to lash out at those around us, contributing to the chaos and decay of the society we live in. Families are torn apart by abuse, people retreat behind huge personal walls to escape from the world and end up in the darkest depressions, fighting and killing fill prisons to overflowing, and there seems to be no end in sight to the vicious cycle.

What do we do? Where do we turn to? How do we free ourselves from the demons that pervade our society at every level? The answer to this is that we have to face the core fears we all carry inside. We have to smash down the walls we have built around ourselves that stop others from seeing that we too are compassionate, creative, loving and often vulnerable. We have to throw aside the masks that set us apart from our true selves.

Psychological resources

You might say this is an impossible task, with not enough psychological resources, and a population so beset with trauma that it would take centuries to accomplish.

Many South Africans of all walks of life have already experienced the real liberation that takes place when you gain access to old memories that made you

believe you were worthless; that pushed you to the last hurdle where you believed that there was nothing worthwhile left; that pushed your family, friends and colleagues away; and that gnawed at you every day of your life at both a conscious and subconscious levels, reducing your productivity, communication and general quality of life.

From company leaders to clerks to school teachers to learners, we are all subjected to the same sets of rules, values and beliefs that have often held us back and prevented us from fulfilling our true potential as people. By accessing the time when this was taken on board, clearing out the emotional shutdown that resulted, and taking on healthy, informed choices and beliefs, we are able to move forward in our lives in a way that includes rather than excludes, that is compassionate rather than judgmental, that allows us to live Ubuntu, and that removes even the need for a concept such as Batho Pele. It is time to return to who we really are - naturally, openly, and with no agenda other than living with integrity and an open, wholesome way of life for all. •

**Lydia Hoyland is a facilitator and practitioner working with the South African Chapter of The Journey Training, Counselling and Motivation Organisation.*