

From Manure to Armani **By Megan McDonough**

To the veterinarian coming to check out our horse Rocky's lame hoof, I looked like your typical farmhand. Sporting a very stylish and flattering one-piece Carhart snowsuit, fat felt-pack LL Bean boots, a gray wool hat pulled low over my ears, and hands tucked into matching wool gloves, I was the big brown female version of the Michelin tire guy. Watch out Baywatch guys, I'm way hot—temperature-wise, that is.

But...underneath the not-so-seductive brown suit, I wore a white cashmere sweater, black dress pants and, tucked into my boots, nylons instead of wool socks. After Dr. Mark was done, I played Clark Kent. I whipped off the hat and mittens, zipped out of the canvas coveralls, and threw on a black-and-white suit coat. I tossed the felt-packs down cellar and slipped on leather loafers. Then, like Superman, I flew off to my business meeting.

I wondered if my colleagues could smell horse manure.

Just like Clark Kent, I felt the power that comes from almost magically changing identity, in this case from farmer to corporate executive.

How many roles do you play in life? Is there room for all that you are, all the identities that allow you to express the many facets of who you are?

Everybody has different talents and interests that like to come out and play. Sometimes I crave being outside in nature—taking care of the horses and dogs and making maple syrup on the farm. Other times sitting in front of a fire with a book is heaven. On some days, teaching yoga is just what I need; on others, business meetings can feel creative and constructive. Through it all, playing the role of mother and homemaker brings a sense of continuity.

But if I play any one role for too long without a break, I get cranky. What was satisfying becomes a chore. Too much mothering can be draining; too much work makes Jack a dull boy; too much of any one thing becomes bland. Just as with food, rotation and moderation lead to balance.

Feelings of being trapped, a sense of monotony, or a “same shift, different day” attitude are all sure signs that other interests are being stifled.

You may not move from manure shoveler to corporate trainer, but does your day have a changing rhythm? What roles do you move between in the course of the day? What is your relationship to each of these roles?

Like Superman's spandex and my Michelin-man getup, the uniforms that go with your roles may vary widely—or not at all. The question is how comfortably each one fits, and whether your transitions from one to the next are as effortless as slipping in and out of a phone booth.

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