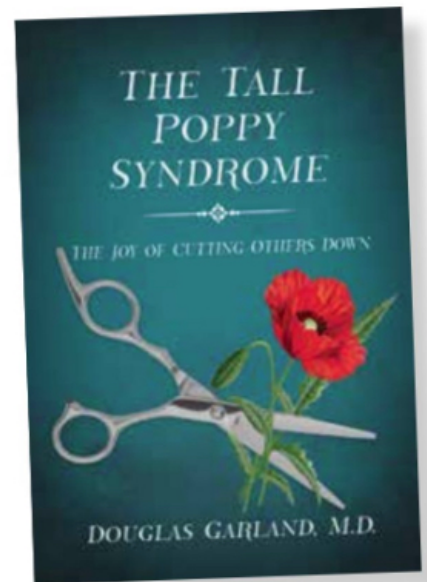


BY BRIAN SCHWARTZ



I can count on one hand the number of titles that have made as much of an impact on me as the recently published “The Tall Poppy Syndrome: The Joy of Cutting Others Down.” Doug Garland is a Pismo Beach author and retired surgeon who has spent the past ten years of his life studying a phenomenon that most of us have never heard of. Once you grasp the concept, it begins to appear everywhere.

The Tall Poppy Syndrome (TPS) reveals a dark side of success. For those inflicted by TPS, the understanding of it can remove the veil to a new truth, one too often misinterpreted by the tall poppy.

It's inevitable that the more you achieve, the more likely you are to be cast out by your own tribe. Think about the resentment you feel for a co-worker who gets accolades for something you've selflessly done for ages. I dreaded our annual sales conference where my peers were awarded bonuses, despite the fact that all of us put in an equal amount of time and effort. I secretly resented my peers and also felt a tinge of guilt whenever I received accolades.

TPS shows why those closest to you might be the ones who have the hardest time accepting your highest accomplishments. Given the emotional pain of being cut down by members of our own tribe, are we unknowingly holding ourselves back in an effort to avoid outshining those closest to us? It also explains why it is so rare for an individual to break out of the environment they are born into. Like crabs in a pot, when one tries to escape, the other crabs are quick to pull it back down.

Are you subconsciously sabotaging your own success to avoid being cut down (or canceled) by your peers? The longer you work in any field, the more others will surpass your own achievements. In a competitive world, it's natural to feel satisfaction when someone ahead of us has a setback. We don't like it when their achievements put us in a subordinate position. Their success threatens our own self-esteem.

TPS offers an explanation of why we fear success. Most of us have a deep inner drive to belong. If you've ever been left out (intentionally or not), you know how it feels. To stand out is to risk being cast out. Too often, we continue to play it safe within the silent limits of our tribe. With this groundbreaking insight, TPS might explain why many of us fail to reach our true potential and might provide a key to unlocking a new level of success.

TPS helps explain the cancel culture phenomenon. Are we unknowingly using TPS to undermine the efforts of those who ultimately can take our society beyond its current limits? I'd like to hope that instead we honor the tall poppies in our society. **SLO LIFE**