

Channelling the Hoff

By Ruth Ostrow

I RECENTLY had a surprising encounter with a prominent practitioner. Known in his field as one of the best, I passed on a compliment from another source. To my amazement he went all gooey and giggly. "You've made my day!" "Why?" I asked. "It's always good to be reminded that people respect my work. I'm never sure," he said, showing an unexpected insecurity.

That same week there were some stories in the newspaper about actor David Hasselhoff, who is anything but insecure. "The Hoff" announced he wanted to be laid to rest in a glass coffin. "I was actually thinking of being buried under my Hollywood star, looking up so people could look down and watch me decompose," said the former Baywatch star.

I presumed he was joking until I read another story in which he claimed Princess Diana had wanted to bed him. At the launch of his autobiography, *Making Waves*, the star claimed "she was smitten with me" and boasted that "sparks" flew between them when they met in 1993. Such gems of wisdom from a man whose fans have created a website devoted to his hair.

It's hard to gauge why some people have so much self-love that they fantasise about people watching their corpse rot, while others have so little.

A number of years ago I attended a personal development workshop. The facilitator asked people to put their hands up if they felt disappointed with what they'd achieved in life. The majority (more than 200 people) put up their hands. Facts about their achievements brought groans of frustration. "I'm about to write my fifth scientific book," said one man; others had gained degrees in all manner of subjects, travelled the world, built amazing empires and families. And yet all felt inadequate.

Here is my conspiracy theory. I think David Hasselhoff is secretly syphoning off all the self-confidence in the world using a Dr Who-style sci-fi machine, leaving the rest of us riddled with self-doubt, buying face creams, clothes, new cars and ingesting Viagra in a desperate bid to reassure ourselves we are okay.

I say let's all channel The Hoff: I am beautiful. I have amazing hair. Princesses love me. Everyone loves me – alive or dead.

Compared with the chronic self-loathing and wasteful, negative self-speak that afflicts most people – and underpins excessive spending on "happy pills" and "dreams in a bottle" in this consumer-driven society – rampant egoism has definite appeal.

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