

Loving the Wounded Child Within

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Healing Self Through Inner Child Work

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"It is through having the courage and willingness to revisit the emotional "dark night of the soul" that was our childhood, that we can start to understand on a gut level why we have lived our lives as we have.

It is when we start understanding the cause and effect relationship between what happened to the child that we were, and the effect it had on the adult we became, that we can Truly start to forgive ourselves. It is only when we start understanding on an emotional level, on a gut level, that we were powerless to do anything any differently than we did that we can Truly start to Love ourselves.

The hardest thing for any of us to do is to have compassion for ourselves. As children we felt responsible for the things that happened to us. We blamed ourselves for the things that were done to us and for the deprivations we suffered. There is nothing more powerful in this transformational process than being able to go back to that child who still exists within us and say, "It wasn't your fault. You didn't do anything wrong, you were just a little kid."

"As long as we are judging and shaming ourselves we are giving power to the disease. We are feeding the monster that is devouring us.

We need to take responsibility without taking the blame. We need to own and honor the feelings without being a victim of them.

We need to rescue and nurture and Love our inner children - and STOP them from controlling our lives. STOP them from driving the bus! Children are not supposed to drive, they are not supposed to be in control.

And they are not supposed to be abused and abandoned. We have been doing it backwards. We abandoned and abused our inner children. Locked them in a dark place within us. And at the same time let the children drive the bus - let the children's wounds dictate our lives."

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Quote from Codependence: The Dance of Wounded Souls

When we were 3 or 4 we couldn't look around us and say, "Well, Dad's a drunk and Mom is real depressed and scared - that is why it feels so awful here. I think I'll go get my own apartment."

Our parents were our higher powers. We were not capable of understanding that they might have problems that had nothing to do with us. So it felt like it was our fault.

We formed our relationship with ourselves and life in early childhood. We learned about love from people who were not capable of loving in a healthy way because of their unhealed childhood wounds. Our core / earliest relationship with our self was formed from the feeling that something is wrong and it must be me. At the core of our being is a little kid who believes that he/she is unworthy and unlovable. That was the foundation that we built our concept of "self" on.

Children are master manipulators. That is their job - to survive in whatever way works. So we adapted defense systems to protect our broken hearts and wounded spirits. The 4 year old learned to throw tantrums, or be real quiet, or help clean the house, or protect the younger siblings, or be cute and funny, etc. Then we got to be 7 or 8 and started being able to understand cause and effect and use reason and logic - and we changed our defense systems to fit the circumstances. Then we reach puberty and didn't have a clue what was happening to us, and no healthy adults to help us understand, so we adapted our defense systems to protect our vulnerability. And then we were teenagers and our job was to start becoming independent and prepare ourselves to be adults so we changed our defense systems once again.

It is not only dysfunctional, it is ridiculous to maintain that what happened in our childhood did not affect our adult life. We have layer upon layer of denial, emotional dishonesty, buried trauma, unfulfilled needs, etc., etc. Our hearts were broken, our spirit's wounded, our minds programmed dysfunctionally. The choices we have made as adults were made in reaction to our childhood wounds / programming - our lives have been dictated by our wounded inner children.

(History, politics, "success" or lack of "success," in our dysfunctional society/civilizations can always be made clearer by looking at the childhoods of the individuals involved. History has been, and is being, made by immature, scared, angry, hurt individuals who were/are reacting to their childhood wounds and programming - reacting to the little child inside who feels unworthy and unlovable.)

It is very important to realize that we are not an integrated whole being - to ourselves. Our self concept is fractured into a multitude of pieces. In some instances we feel powerful and strong, in others weak and helpless - that is because different parts of us are reacting to different stimuli (different "buttons" are being pushed.) The parts of us that feel weak, helpless, needy, etc. are not bad or wrong - what is being felt is perfect for the reality that was experienced by the part of our self that is reacting (perfect for then - but it has very little to do with what is happening in the now). It is very important to start having compassion for that wounded part of ourselves.

It is by owning our wounds that we can start taking the power away from the wounded part of us. When we suppress the feelings, feel ashamed about our reactions, do not own that part of our being, then we give it power. It is the feelings that we are hiding from that dictate our behavior, that fuel obsession and compulsion.

Codependence is a disease of extremes.

Those of us who were horrified and deeply wounded by a perpetrator in childhood - and were never going to be like that parent - adapted a more passive defense system to avoid confrontation and "hurting others." The more passive type of codependent defense system leads to a dominant pattern of being the victim.

Those of us who were disgusted by, and ashamed of, the victim parent in childhood and vowed never to be like that role model, adapted a more aggressive defense system. So we go charging through life being the bull in the china shop - being the perpetrator who blames other people for not allowing us to be in control. The perpetrator that feels like a victim of other people not doing things "right" - which is what forces us to bulldoze our way through life.

And, of course, some of us go first one way and then the other. (We all have our own personal spectrum of extremes that we swing between - sometimes being the victim, sometimes being the perpetrator. Being a passive victim is perpetrating on those around us.)

The only way we can be whole is to own all of the parts of ourselves. By owning all the parts we can then have choices about how we respond to life. By denying, hiding, and suppressing parts of ourselves we doom ourselves to live life in reaction.

A technique I have found very valuable in this healing process is to relate to the different wounded parts of our self as different ages of the inner child. These different ages of the child may be literally tied to an event that happened at that age - i.e. when I was 7 I tried to commit suicide. Or the age of the child might be a symbolic designator for a pattern of abuse/deprivation that occurred throughout our childhood - i.e. the 9 year old within me feels completely emotionally isolated and desperately needy/lonely, a condition which was true for most of my childhood and not tied to any specific incident (that I know of) that happened when I was 9.

By searching out, getting acquainted with, owning the feelings of, and building a relationship with, these different emotional wounds/ages of the inner child, we can start being a loving parent to ourselves instead of an abusive one. We can have boundaries with ourselves that allow us to: take responsibility for being a co-creator of our life (grow up); protect our inner children from the perpetrator within/critical parent (be loving to ourselves); stop letting our childhood wounds control our life (take loving action for ourselves); and own the Truth of who we really are (Spiritual Beings) so that we can open up to receive the Love and Joy we deserve.

It is impossible to Truly love the adult that we are without owning the child that we were. In order to do that we need to

detach from our inner process (and stop the disease from abusing us) so that we can have some objectivity and discernment that will allow us to have compassion for our own childhood wounds. Then we need to grieve those wounds and own our right to be angry about what happened to us in childhood - so that we can Truly know in our gut that it wasn't our fault - we were just innocent little kids.

Go to Feeling the Feelings