

# Sanctuary Trauma

Sanctuary Trauma ~ Memories and Emotional Honesty

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"Codependence is a form of Delayed Stress Syndrome.

Instead of blood and death (although some do experience blood and death literally), what happened to us as children was spiritual death and emotional maiming, mental torture and physical violation. We were forced to grow up denying the reality of what was happening in our homes. We were forced to deny our feelings about what we were experiencing and seeing and sensing. We were forced to deny our selves. . . .

The war we were born into, the battlefield each of us grew up in, was not in some foreign country against some identified "enemy" - it was in the "homes" which were supposed to be our safe haven with our parents whom we Loved and trusted to take care of us. It was not for a year or two or three - it was for sixteen or seventeen or eighteen years.

We experienced what is called "sanctuary trauma" - our safest place to be was not safe - and we experienced it on a daily basis for years and years. Some of the greatest damage was done to us in subtle ways on a daily basis because our sanctuary was a battlefield."

Quote from Codependence: The Dance of Wounded Souls {/xtypo\_info}

In a Co-Dependents Anonymous meeting last week, I heard someone share a very telling insight. A woman at the meeting had run into an old friend from her childhood. In reminiscing about growing up together, they discovered that each had memories of times together in the others home - but no memories of being together in their own homes.

It was in our own homes that most of us suffered the most damaging trauma. Whether our families were overtly dysfunctional because of alcoholism, physical abuse, physical or mental illness, etc. - or covertly dysfunctional because of parental emotional dishonesty, unreasonable expectations, unresolved emotional currents, emotional incest, etc. - they were dysfunctional. Our parents did not know how to love themselves or to be emotionally healthy, and as a result they were at war within themselves - the codependent battle of self judgment and shame, of repressing and denying (and/or expressing abusively) one's own emotions - and were doing a dysfunctional dance with each other and with life.

Our homes, our sanctuaries, were not safe places. Our parents - who were our Higher Powers - were not healthy, so it was impossible for them to parent us in a healthy way.

It is actually quite normal for most of us to have very few memories inside of our homes with our family members. We may have memories of being alone in our homes, or memories outside of the home - but since home was where we suffered the most traumatic emotional wounds (the disapproval of our gods), it was where we most needed to use denial

in order to cope.

It is normal, for most of us when we start doing the inner child work, to have few memories. We have spent many years purposely not looking back.

There are also some people who have a lot of memories. Some of us have memories that we look at through rose colored glasses - the good memories of what a happy childhood we had - while suppressing and denying the painful ones. Some are stuck in looking at the past from a victim perspective that allows them to abrogate taking any responsibility for their lives.

What is important for any of us, is to get emotionally honest with ourselves about our childhoods. We need to look back at the past as a way to free ourselves from the past. In order to do that, it is important to see our past more clearly - and to get in touch with our emotional wounds.

I did not have very many memories of my childhood when I got into recovery. In doing the inner child healing, I regained some memories - but I still have relatively few of them. It is not important to remember a great deal. What is important is to get honest with ourselves on an emotional level in our relationship with our childhoods.

Often we have memories that have no emotional charge. They are just events or snapshots that we remember - and we are not conscious of, have never stopped to ask our selves, what we were feeling at the time.

Once such memory that I started to look at in early recovery, is a graphic example of the power of denial. In the memory, I was standing in the kitchen with my mother when I was about 8 or so. Her back was to me, and I was standing staring at a butcher knife on the counter. In the memory I was wondering what it would feel like to stab her with it.

In looking at this memory in early recovery, I dismissed it as alcoholic thinking. It wasn't until some 2 and 1/2 years later that I started to look at what emotions may be attached to that memory. One day it occurred to me that I may have had some anger at my mother.

My mother was perfectly what she had been trained to be: a self sacrificing martyr with no self worth and no ability to set boundaries. Her definition of love was that one cannot be angry at someone they love. My father was what he was trained to be: a raging perfectionist who had no permission to acknowledge any emotion except anger.

So, my mother was the good guy and my father was the bad guy. It was all right for me to be angry at my father (not to his face of course) - but absolutely not ok to be angry at my mother.

What I eventually discovered was that I had a great deal of rage towards my mother. More rage towards my mother - because I had to deny it since she was the one who seemed the most loving - than towards my father who it had always been ok for me to own anger towards.

I have found this to be a common dynamic: that most people have more anger suppressed against the good parent (the one that was less abusive), than toward the more overtly abusive parent.

Until I got emotionally honest with myself in relationship to my feelings about my mother, it was impossible for me to have any kind of an honest relationship with any woman. There are many men who say they love women and trust them more than men - because their mother was the "good" parent - who are actually carrying a great deal of rage at women because of the rage they haven't owned against their mothers.

Getting emotionally honest with ourselves in relationship to our childhoods is absolutely vital in order to be able to start having healthier relationships today.

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