

## Therapy & Counselling

Inner Child Healing - Choosing a therapist or counselor with discernment

### Therapy and Counseling

I get at least a couple of e-mails every week from people who are trying to find counselors and therapists in their local area who do the type of inner child healing / codependency recovery work that I talk about in my book and on my web site. Several that I received this week, combined with some very codependent, abusive, and dysfunctional behavior exhibited by a counselor some telephone counseling clients of mine had been seeing, spurred me to create this page.

I am going to begin this page with an article which I wrote last year for my inner child/codependency recovery page of the internet directory Suite101.

Inner Child Healing - Choosing a therapist or counselor

"It is also a vital part of the process to learn discernment. To learn to ask for help and guidance from people who are trustworthy, that means people who will not betray, abandon, shame, and abuse you. That means friends who will not abuse and betray you. That means counselors and therapists who will not judge and shame you and project their issues onto you.

(I believe that the cases of "false memories" that are getting a lot of publicity these days are in reality cases of emotional incest - which is rampant in our society and can be devastating to a person's relationship with his/her own sexuality - that are being misunderstood and misdiagnosed as sexual abuse by therapists who have not done their own emotional healing and project their own issues of emotional incest and/or sexual abuse onto their patients).

Someone who has not done her/his own emotionally healing grief work cannot guide you through yours. Or as John Bradshaw put it in his excellent PBS series on reclaiming the inner child, "No one can lead you somewhere that they haven't been."

(Quotations in this color are from Codependence: The Dance of Wounded Souls)

In his PBS series on healing the inner child, John Bradshaw talked about how important it is to choose counselors and therapists who have done their own emotional healing. He stated that he had been in recovery for 10 years and counseling for that period of time before he started doing the emotional healing. Prior to starting that process if someone he was working with started to get emotional, he would immediately take steps to pull them out of the emotions back onto an intellectual level.

One of the most important things to check out when you are interviewing a new counselor/therapist - is whether they have done any emotional healing. If they have not done any grief and anger work - actual emotional release work involving the deep grieving of sobs and snot running out the nose, and anger work, beating on cushions while they shout out their rage - then they will not want you to get emotional. Doing the deep emotional work can be terrifying - and unless the person who is facilitating your work has been through it themselves, they will be scared by your emotions. They will try to get you back into an intellectual framework - and many of them will tell you that you need to go on medication.

Too often, when we start counseling or therapy, we feel it is somehow shameful, or weak, because of our cultural programming - and come kind of hat in hand, as it were. We come to the professional from a place of hoping they won't tell us we are the sickest person they have ever met, and there is nothing they can do for us - or at least that was what I was sure was going to happen.

It is important to remember that the person going to the therapist is the employer. You are the one doing the job interview with the power to decide who gets the job. You are the one that is going to be paying for services and you have a right to ask any questions you need to - including what healing they have done personally. Because someone has degrees, credentials, and is licensed does not mean they have done any healing on a personal level. In an emotionally dysfunctional society, the standards used to judge qualifications are based on the dysfunctional, emotionally dishonest standards of the society.

My first experience of going to a licensed therapist in my recovery from codependence, was a very telling one. I went to a therapist that was recommended by a friend. I told her that I wanted to deal with emotional enmeshment issues with my mother. (In a future article in this series I will talk about the emotional incest that is mentioned in the quote above - and what I was calling emotional enmeshment at that point in my recovery.) The third session I had with this person, she delightedly told me that she wanted to line me up with a blind date. A blind date with someone who worked for her husband, who had his office in their home as she did. Duh! The therapist I am seeing to sort out emotional enmeshment issues wants to line me up on a blind date - absolutely inappropriate and very codependent, thinking a relationship would fix me - with someone who works for her husband in the same building we are in - talk about enmeshing and incestuous.

She could not understand why I was upset. I left that day, and went home to process what had just happened. In processing through the issue, it was obvious to me how inappropriate and unhealthy this therapist was. So, I called her up that evening and fired her. I was very proud of myself because I did not buy into the guilt trips she laid on me as she tried to convince me that I was the one with the problem and that there was nothing wrong with her suggestion.

There is no one as good as a therapist at turning issues back on you so that it seems to be all your problem. Therapist can be very difficult people to have personal relationships with - unless they are working an honest recovery program, and sometimes even then. And if they are not involved in a personal recovery program, it is inevitable they will project their issues and judgments onto their patients. Even therapists who are seeing another therapist for supervision, can

only be as healthy as the belief systems which he/she and the supervising therapist are empowering. And if those belief systems do not include an understanding of the importance of emotional healing, they will not be able to help someone do the emotional healing.

Another experience came shortly after I had started in a therapist position at an outpatient chemical dependence program in Van Nuys California in 1987. One evening in a Family Group I was talking about how grateful I was to be in recovery and I teared up from joy - I didn't cry, just teared up. The next week the Clinical Director - my supervising therapist - came marching into our office and proceeded to lecture me about getting emotional in front of the clients. This psychiatrist, who was on anti-depressants because he was suicidal over a relationship breakup, warned me to never let it happen again.

Often the more credentials someone has, the more tendency they have to wear blinders. To see things only within the traditional paradigm - which labels and pigeon holes individuals - and more often than not, discounts emotions while worshiping chemicals.

Allow your Spirit guide you - not your shame. Talk to a person, meet with them, and see how you feel about them. Do they feel like someone you can trust? Does what they have to say resonate? Do you feel like they are really hearing you? Are they empowering a belief system that is black and white, right and wrong? (If they are, they will judge you.) Do they talk to you - or down to you?

It is your choice. You are the one holding the audition. Going to see a counselor or therapist can be a very important and invaluable experience - but it is important to remember that choosing a therapist is not a commitment to them, it is a commitment to you.

(This article was originally published on Suite101 Directory - the Inner Child/Codependency Recovery page which was then edited by Robert Burney.)

This article contains a paragraph or two I wrote for my recommended referrals page, and a few lines that I have used elsewhere in describing my experiences and opinions in this area. I decided to also include some other thoughts that I had originally written in the very first Joy to You & Me Newsletter published July 1, 1998 - and had quoted in various ways on other pages since (including in the introduction to my Miscellaneous Topics index page.) And then, because of references to medication in both of those pieces of work, I decided to include some quotes from my Joy2MeU Journal where I talk about anti-depressants and other medications. I will give a brief introduction to these two pieces below - but first there are a couple more facets to this issue that I want to discuss.

The Importance of Seeking Help

As I was preparing this page, I got an uncomfortable feeling because I realized that someone could see my opinions in the article above as the "right" way to do things - and use them as an excuse to not seek counseling because they couldn't find someone who meets these standards. It is important to get help. We all need some help at times in seeing ourselves more clearly. Some counselors and therapists that haven't necessarily done the emotional healing may still be very helpful to you early in your process - or at specific points in your healing.

The reality is that inner child healing and codependency recovery are still pretty new - and many very well meaning professionals out there do not know a lot about this work. My approach to the work is unique and pioneering, and no one out there is doing exactly what I do and describe. You will find very few counselors and therapist who define codependence in as large a context as I do; many who do not see it as a Spiritual disease; many who have not done their own emotional work.

I do not know of anyone who combines developing internal boundaries with doing the grief work as part of building an ongoing relationship with different ages of the child within - the framework that I developed for integrating knowledge of healthy behavior and Spiritual Truth into one's emotional relationship with life. That is the most powerfully life changing and transformational aspect of my approach to the work. Your chances of finding someone who does exactly that kind of work are almost nil.

But you can find good people out there doing important work. You can find people: who can lovingly facilitate grief work; who can be very helpful in seeing your codependence when you are blind to it in certain areas; who are very good at teaching Loving Spiritual concepts; who can help you understand specific dynamics around such issues as verbal abuse or sex addiction etc. It is possible to find counselors and therapist who can be very helpful in your process.

What is important is to be careful about giving them too much power. The purpose of the work as I see it, is for each individual to become empowered to access and trust their own inner guidance. There will come a point when it is time to move on - or when you only need to see them once in a while. The goal is to stop making any outside source your higher power - including your counselor or therapist.

It is important to recognize that no one has the right to judge or shame you - especially a counselor. Counselors and therapist are wounded human beings who sometimes let their own agendas influence what they say to you. There may be things about you that trigger their wounds. Pay attention. Recognize if you have outgrown what they have to offer. Do not buy into thinking that because they were helpful for awhile, that means they are always right.

Do seek help. It is important. As you are seeking help pay attention. This paragraph from the my article is a good rule of thumb to follow.

Allow your Spirit guide you - not your shame. Talk to a person, meet with them, and see how you feel about them. Do they feel like someone you can trust? Does what they have to say resonate? Do you feel like they are really hearing you? Are they empowering a belief system that is black and white, right and wrong? (If they are, they will judge you.) Do they talk to you - or down to you?

And remember, you are the employer.

## Finding therapists and counselors

Some time ago, I started a referral page for any counselors/therapists/healers who do work that aligns in some way with the work I describe. It includes healers who have e-mailed me to let me know they are out there - and others that were referred by someone reading my site. That project has been somewhat of a disappointment in terms of the number of resources gathered. I would welcome any additions to it.

In most areas there are free papers that are devoted to healing or New Age or some similar theme that have ads for healers and counselors. Some larger newspapers have a Mind Body Spirit section, or something similar, with ads and events like workshops listed. Most areas have Community Colleges that offer Adult Education classes that include such things as: self esteem, healthy relationship behavior, and other helpful resources.

The internet is a great resource for finding help if you know where to look. The search techniques that I describe on my page about Finding CoDA and ACoA meetings locally, can also be used for finding therapists and counselors locally. By putting " " around what you are looking for and then adding the locale (city, county, etc.) Google - the best search engine on the internet - can help you maximize your chances of finding local resources. For example, "codependence counselor" \_\_\_\_ (your city) or "inner child therapist" \_\_\_\_ (your area) or any combination you can think of that may help you find what you are looking for: codependence, codependency, inner child, grief, etc. + counselor or therapist or workshop etc. in quotation marks plus your area.

People at 12 step meetings can sometimes be a good referral source for healers/counselors that individuals in the meeting have found helpful - and going to 12 step meetings can certainly be a help in recovery. It is advantageous if you take an attitude like one that I developed for myself in early recovery. Because I found myself being so judgmental of many of the people and skeptical about much of the sharing, I decided that I was letting my disease dictate my relationship with meetings. So, I started telling myself that I needed to go to meetings because there was going to be one thing that I needed to hear said that day, at that meeting. When I stopped giving so much power to the judgments, and started to pay attention for one thing to help me, it changed my relationship with meetings. There was usually far more than one thing I needed to hear - but until I started letting go of all the judgments I often didn't see the value in the meetings. I needed to realize that the focus on judging was the disease trying to keep me from getting help.

Be Loving and kind to yourself by getting help when you need it. Asking for help is part of working the 3rd step. It is very important to be willing to ask for help. It is also important to learn to be discerning in who we ask. My experience with the therapist who wanted to line me up on a blind date was invaluable. I saw very clearly that I could take care of myself. In retrospect, I now know that I went to that therapist so that I could have the empowering experience of standing up for my intuition and firing her. Go find yourself a counselor, and then if you don't feel comfortable with them, fire them. It will not be a mistake - it will be a opportunity for growth, and a perfect part of your path. ~ Robert 4-23-01

## Role Models

This is an excerpt from the first Joy to You & Me Newsletter published July 1, 1998. The web pages from my original web site that were not been moved to the Joy2MeU web site can be found on the Joy to You & Me index page. You will notice that this quote starts out with a paragraph which I used in part in the article above.

"He proceeded to lecture me about getting emotional in front of the clients - this psychiatrist who was on anti-depressants because he was suicidal over a relationship breakup - warned me to never let it happen again. I was not far enough along in my recovery at that point to confront him but I do remember thinking to myself - "Then who is supposed to be the role models?"

The thing that was the most damaging to us was the role modeling of the emotionally crippled adults we grew up around - the role modeling is what taught us the dysfunctional definitions of who we are as emotional beings. It is vitally important, in my opinion, that we have some beings who are willing to role model what emotionally healthy behavior is - which includes being emotionally vulnerable at times.

Traditional therapy/counseling in this society is set up as a one up-one down situation - that is, the therapist is set up as the expert who treats the poor unfortunate patient. I happen to agree with something Ram Dass once said about this - "If you meet a therapist who thinks you are the patient - run!"\*

There were two interrelated things that I had to get clear about when I started working as a therapist: One is that I am powerless over other people - over the pace of their progress, over whether they hear what I am saying to them, over where their path leads. I watched a good friend die of Alcoholism (which is in a column in the Alcoholism section) and saw how clearly he helped other alcoholics stay sober because he couldn't - he did more to keep more people sober than many of the sober people I know. I can't know what someone else's path is - therefore I can't tell them what is right and wrong. What I can do is help them see themselves clearer (especially as to understanding how their childhood experiences have dictated their lives), see their choices and the possible consequences clearer, and know that we are Spiritual Beings going to boarding school not taking a test we can fail.

Which brings me to the second thing, which I believe is a Spiritual Truth - I teach best what I need most to learn. I teach people how to Love themselves because I am trying to learn how to Love myself. I learned to always listen to what I was saying because, though I have no control whether anyone else hears me, I do have the power to choose to hear myself - and there is always something in what I am saying that applies to me and my process in that moment. . . . I am in process just as my clients are - just as we all are. There is no hierarchy as far as I am concerned - just one wounded person/Magnificent Spiritual Being sharing what has worked for me with another wounded person/Magnificent Spiritual Being. I am doing what I need to do for myself, to heal myself - it doesn't have to do with anyone else - that it helps other people is just a bonus (and an opportunity to settle Karma)." -

Joy to You & Me Newsletter I - July 1,1998

\*My version of this would be something like: If you meet a therapist who tells you that he/she does not have any issues from childhood and does not need recovery - run.

## Anti-depressants

I started the Joy2MeU Journal two years ago in April. The inspiration for the Journal grew out all the requests I was getting from people who wanted to know when my next books would be published. Since I had not been successful in raising the financing to self publish as I did my first book - or found a major publisher who was interested - I hit on a subscription Journal as a way to publish those next two books and also take advantage of one of the assets I had to get more money flowing into my life. It turned out to be an important part of my recovery process over the last two years - and has not generated that much income. (As usual, I am led to do what I need to do, even though what I think it is about doesn't really have much to do with my Higher Power's plan.)

The Journal has since then grown quite a bit from the original idea and probably includes at least 3 books - and maybe 4. One of those is the story of my recovery process/Spiritual Path which I call The Path of one Recovering Codependent ~ the dance of one wounded soul. Included in this series is the story of the emotional breakthrough (what society calls a breakdown) that I went through in late 1987 and early 1988 leading up to my spending 30 days in the desert - in the Sierra Tucson Treatment Center in Arizona - experiencing a 30 day treatment program for codependence (clinically called depression.)

The following excerpts are from the one of the articles that chronicle my descent into the deep grief and rage - and how I learned to release the grief and rage and breakthrough into a life experience that is progressively more defined by Joy, Love and peace than by pain, anger, and fear. It starts off with the quote from that same First Joy to You & Me Newsletter.

"Another incident also comes to mind. I had just started in a therapist position at an outpatient chemical dependence program in Van Nuys California a little over 10 years ago. One evening in a Family Group I was talking about how grateful I was to be in recovery and I teared up - I did not cry, just teared up. The next week the Clinical Director came marching into our office and needed to talk to me about something he was quite disturbed about. He proceeded to lecture me about getting emotional in front of the clients - this psychiatrist who was on anti-depressants because he was suicidal over a relationship breakup - warned me to never let it happen again. I was not far enough along in my recovery at that point to confront him but I do remember thinking to myself - "Then who is supposed to be the role models?"

Newsletter for July 1, 1998 - Joy to You & Me Newsletter I

So here I am trying to teach people how to stay sober and deal with their feelings and the suicidal psychiatrist who is my clinical director warns me that I will be fired if I ever get emotional in front of clients again. He did not even realize what emotional was. In February and March of 1988 I was breaking down completely at the office - never when the clients were there, before they came in. Luckily my probation period was over by the time I was crying uncontrollably in the office.

This is part of the hypocrisy and dysfunction in the mental health system of this society. Therapists must always be professional and never show their clients any emotions while telling them how important it is to feel their feelings. The people who are supposed to be role models are taught to keep up appearances - which is, of course, part of the disease. Keep up appearances, wear a mask, keep the secrets - never show that you are human.

Unfortunately, far too many therapists in this country do not know anything about emotional honesty anyway. They have not done their own emotional healing and do not have a clue how to help others through theirs. . . ."

"Our mental health system not only does not promote healing - it actually blocks the process. The mental health system in this country is designed to get your behavior and emotions under control so that you can fit back into the dysfunctional system.

Drugs that are designed to disconnect you from your feelings block the healing process. Mental health professionals who need to have you see them regularly in order to be financially supported, need to have you be dependent upon them, need to keep you a patient in order to survive."

Therapy that fosters dependence and does not include emotional release is not very healing. Unfortunately, too many therapists still look at therapy as a one up - one down type of situation. In other words, they are the experts and you are the poor patient. This is also a type of codependence: a person gets in relationships with people who are more messed up than they are so that they can have some control. I happen to agree with Ram Dass who once said, "If you meet a therapist who thinks of you as a patient - run."

Back in the fall of 1987, I was about to meet a very screwed up therapist. But before getting into that I want to say something about the quote from my book above regarding anti-Depressants.

Anti-depressants are life savers for some people. I would never advise someone not to go on anti-depressants. I personally refused them. I was told by 3 different experts in the spring of 1988 that I should go on anti-depressants - and I told them all the same thing: "I am a recovering alcoholic and drug addict. I have been taking something for the pain most of my life. I want to learn how to deal with these feelings, not medicate them."

I am very happy I did that. I was also very fortunate and blessed that when I broke down (through) I had the opportunity

to go to treatment and deal with the feelings in a safe environment. I was very fortunate and blessed that I had some therapists in treatment who knew how to facilitate grief work so that I could learn how to do my grieving. I know that I could not have done the healing that I did as rapidly as I did it, nor could I have broken through to communication from the Spirit the way I did, if I had not refused. I was following my intuition and my Higher Power's plan unfolded perfectly to give me exactly what I needed, when I needed it.

So, for me anti-depressants were not necessary. I can not tell anyone else what their path is in regard to this issue - or any issue for that matter. What I would say, is that I think it is best to think of such medication as a temporary aid.

There are some people who have genetically messed up brain chemistry. I think that a minority of the people who are told they need anti-depressants really do need them on a long term basis.

For the great majority of folks, I believe the brain chemistry is messed up because of the repressed emotional energy. Doing the emotional healing - the grief and rage work - as part of the inner child healing process will help most people to find more balance on all levels, including their brain chemistry.

This is strictly my opinion. But, I think it is important to point out, those people who are telling others they need anti-depressants are not people who have done their own emotional healing. Like Bradshaw said, "No one can lead you somewhere they haven't been." Mental health professionals who have not gone through the Black Hole are scared to death when they see someone get real emotional. Doing the emotional healing is terrifying - it is also terrifying for someone to witness it, if they have not gone through it themselves.

I have been through it - so when someone goes into the "out of control" type of emotional place, I can tell them it is all right. I can tell them that they will come through it - because I have been through it. Someone who has not been through it, will not want you to go there. Keep that in mind when making your decision.

Also keep in mind, that almost the only reason that people go to psychiatrists any more is to get drugs. Psychiatrists are glorified drug dealers. They make their living prescribing drugs - they have no incentive whatsoever to tell you that you might not need those drugs.

Our culture is a quick fix type of culture. Everyone is looking for the quick, easy way to do things. We like to treat symptoms without ever looking at the cause. Just because so called "experts" tell you that you need medication, does not mean that they know what they are doing.

If you are on medication, by all means stay on it. Try not to think of it as a permanent solution. If you buy into thinking that they are necessary you will be psychologically addicted to the idea of them. Listen to your Spirit. Over and over again, I have had clients who were on medication, say to me: "It feels like maybe I should start cutting back on it." The Universe is very capable of letting you know when, and if, it is time to start backing off. Don't buy into doing things one way or the other because it is the "right" thing to do, or the "wrong" thing. That is the disease thinking. Everyone's path is different. Your Spirit will guide you. I would just urge you to look at all of the options and not give all your power away to "experts" because they have some degrees.

Now, about the reference I made to the Black Hole. That is something from my book. Since this installment of my recovery stories has turned into a multiple part one, I will share the quote from the book about the Black Hole here now,

before wrapping up this installment.

"When I was willing to hear and see the messages - and take action based upon them - I began to discover the Truth around me. There were certain books of Truth that I was led to that were especially important in my consciousness raising, in my Recovery process. I am now going to quote a story from one of those books which means a lot to me. It is a story from a book called Medicine Cards by Jamie Sams and David Carson. This book deals with the Medicine Wheel, and the totem animals of the Medicine Wheel Spiritual beliefs of certain Native American tribes.

The subject of this particular story is the Swan totem - Swan power:

As Swan looked high above Sacred Mountain, she saw the biggest swirling black hole she had ever seen. Dragonfly came flying by, and Swan stopped him to ask about the black hole. Dragonfly said, "Swan, that is the doorway to the other planes of imagination. I have been guardian of the illusion for many, many moons. If you want to enter there, you would have to ask permission and earn the right."

Swan was not so sure that she wanted to enter the black hole, She asked Dragonfly what was necessary for her to earn entry. Dragonfly replied, "You must be willing to accept whatever the future holds as it is presented, without trying to change the Great Spirit's plan." Swan looked at her ugly little duckling body and then answered, "I will be happy to abide by Great Spirit's plan. I won't fight the currents of the black hole. I will surrender to the flow of the spiral and trust what I am shown." Dragonfly was very happy with Swan's answer and began to spin the magic to break the pond's illusion. Suddenly, Swan was engulfed by a whirlpool in the center of the pond.

Swan reappeared many days later, but now she was graceful and white and long-necked. Dragonfly was stunned! "Swan what happened to you!" he exclaimed. Swan smiled and said, "Dragonfly, I learned to surrender my body to the power of Great Spirit and was taken to where the future lives. I saw many wonders high on Sacred Mountain and because of my faith and my acceptance I have been changed. I have learned to accept a state of Grace."

A "state of Grace" is the condition of being Loved unconditionally by our Creator without having to earn that Love. We are Loved unconditionally by the Great Spirit. What we need to do is to learn to accept that state of Grace.

The way we do that is to change the attitudes and beliefs within us that tell us that we are not Lovable. And we cannot do that without going through the black hole. The black hole that we need to surrender to traveling through is the black hole of our grief. The journey within - through our feelings - is the journey to knowing that we are Loved, that we are Lovable.

It is through willingness and acceptance, through surrender, trust, and faith, that we can begin to own the state of Grace which is our True condition.

We are all beautiful swans who exist in a state of Grace, in a condition of being unconditionally Loved. The dance of Recovery is a process of learning to accept and integrate the Truth of Grace into our lives."

I thought that to end this web page, I would come full circle and use the quote from my book whose last paragraph started out the article that spurred the creation of this page - but first I decided to use a quote that reinforces what I was trying to say above, that there is not a right and wrong way to do recovery.

"Recovery is not a dance of right and wrong, of black and white - it is a dance of integration and balance. The questions in Recovery are: Is it working for you? Is the way you live your life working to meet your needs? Is the way you are living your life bringing you some happiness?

When I state that the grief process works, I am not saying that it is the "right" thing to do, or that you are bad or wrong if you are not actively pursuing your emotional healing.

Maybe it has not been time for you to do your grief work yet. Maybe you have not had a safe place to do it. Maybe it is not part of your path in this lifetime.

No one can tell you what your path is!"

"There is no quick fix! Understanding the process does not replace going through it! There is no magic pill, there is no magic book, there is no guru or channeled entity that can make it possible to avoid the journey within, the journey through the feelings.

No one outside of Self (True, Spiritual Self) is going to magically heal us.

There is not going to be some alien E.T. landing in a spaceship singing, "Turn on your heart light," who is going to magically heal us all.

The only one who can turn on your heart light is you.

The only one who can give your inner children healthy parenting is you.

The only healer who can heal you is within you.

Now we all need help along the way. We all need guidance and support. And it is a vitally important part of the healing process to learn to ask for help.

It is also a vital part of the process to learn discernment. To learn to ask for help and guidance from people who are trustworthy, people who will not betray, abandon, shame, and abuse you. That means friends who will not abuse and betray you. That means counselors and therapists who will not judge and shame you and project their issues onto you."

We are Spiritual Beings having a human experience. We are not alone - even when it appears, and feels like, we are most alone. Listen to your intuition. You are being guided - you will be guided.