

## **CHAPTER 16 THE UNFINISHED BUSINESS OF CHILDHOOD PAIN**

### **WE MUST DISCOVER WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR INSIDE NOT OUTSIDE OF OURSELVES**

We all have an inner peace we can learn to consciously access.

External rational thought creates external feelings.

Internal conscious thought accesses internal feelings.

#### **SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE INVENTORY**

1. The pain of abandonment is the first pain everyone feels. True or False?
2. Being let down can make some people feel hurt. True or False?
3. Some think they will feel hurt when people let them down. True or False?
4. When others let you down and you feel hurt; it is their fault. True or False?.
5. We feel guilty when we let others down because we blame them for letting us down. True or False?
6. People do not have to feel hurt every time they are let down. True or False?

#### **HEALING THE PAIN OF ABANDONMENT**

The young woman's face is contorted as she tearfully sighs, "I am tired of the pain." Turning to her mother, she spouts, "You have never been there for me!" And then to the audience of the TV show she says, "She threw me out when I was sixteen and pregnant--packed my bags and threw me out!"

The mother tearfully responds, "All I want is to do is to start over." The counselor intervenes, speaking to the daughter, "You must forgive your mother. Are you ready to do that? Will you give her a hug?" "I'm not ready for that, not yet." The daughter responds.

Interpretation: She is still not tired enough of the pain.

It seems many times we do not operate on what is true as much as on what we are used to. Until unhealthy pain gets to be too much, we are not willing to change from the irrational to the truth. .

#### **THE DIAGNOSIS**

The pain of abandonment is the first pain we feel, so says Eric Erickson in his book, "The Seven Stages of Life." He also found when people have unfinished business in one stage, they take it with them into the next one.

Over the years I have understood how true this is. To understand the impact of this

statement, you must reflect on it rather than shoot from the hip with a quick "yes" or "no" answer. The truth is, the pain of abandonment is the underlying hurt of all dysfunctional behavior.

This particular common pain comes to people when they are let down. The pain of abandonment and betrayal is the pain an abused person feels, particularly when a family member has let them down. It is the pain of the angry person who is attempting to get rid of the hurt through their anger. Someone let them down or didn't meet their expectations. The pain of guilt is caused by the guilty party letting someone else down. Grief pain is caused by the feeling of being left alone. Sometimes it is directed toward others who let them down--a loved one, who is now gone, or God, who is perceived as having left. The pain of abandonment is carried into adult life because it is the unfinished business of childhood. Unresolved pain carried into adult life is magnified by every failure. To some, it is their guilt, to others, their anger.

The more times we are let down, the greater the pain, the greater the fear, the greater the wound. It infects marriages, families, personal lives and business relationships. It is what drives a person in and out of all kinds of relationships. It drives people into doing things they never thought of doing and not doing things they always wanted to do. It motivates the fear of failure, of what people might think, to the fear of marrying, of being married, of being alone, of being unloved, unsupported, abandoned. It is the prevalent fear in all mental illness. I have found it to be the bottom line behind all dysfunction

It has many disguises. One time it looks like anger, then guilt, then grief. But take the mask off and it will be seen to be abandonment. It is the cry, "You were not there for me!" or "I was not there for you!"

### **THE TREATMENT**

There are two things to look for in understanding the treatment. First, you must acknowledge where the pain comes from. If you think that the pain comes from the event, you will be working with the symptoms, not the cause. You will get some respite, but nothing permanent.

Treating the symptom is like German Chinese food, it has a lot of power, but it doesn't last long.

People fall back into the old rut. Only until the pain is recognized as coming from one's perspective can a lasting treatment begin. Second, you must understand if you believe the lie, you will always be haunted by the darkness.

After years of studying, my understanding is there is only one lie and one truth. And, therefore, only one diagnosis and one treatment. The lie is, "You must feel pain every time you are let down." Even though this sounds like an obvious lie, we all have been seduced into believing it, particularly when we are in a low mood.

This is how we get tricked: Someone lets you down, so you feel hurt and are angry with them. When you let someone else down, they feel hurt and are angry with you. It is your fault. If you had not done that, they would not have been hurt, and so you feel the guilt. The truth is, you do not have to feel hurt every time someone lets you down, nor do you have to feel guilty when you let someone down. However, just because you don't feel guilty does not mean you do not have any responsibility. It is the difference between being reactive or proactive.

Those who have to feel guilty before the act become reactive, controlled, powerless, and ultimately victims. You become proactive, not by feeling guilty, but by doing the right thing.

There is a famous story of taxpayer who sent the IRS \$500 in cash. The note said, "I have felt guilty because I have cheated you of \$1,000. If I still feel guilty after I send you this, I will send the other \$500."

### **APPLIED SPIRITUALITY VERBATIM**

My two most significant mentors were Agnes Sanford, my spiritual advisor, and Bill, my therapist. Agnes taught me about the healing of the soul while Bill was an excellent gestalt counselor.

Gestalt therapy says we have inside of us "shadows" ("Gestalt" is German for "shadows".) By externalizing these "shadows", we are able to see them as they are. Once we put the light of truth on a shadow, it reveals its true nature.

The classical Gestalt tradition has the client sit in various chairs which represent these shadows. To the unobservant, the chairs seem empty. To those with imagination, they contain various shadows or parts of the client's life. They are all a part of the client, and by experiencing their presence, the truth comes out.

I have found as people speak and hear the truth they can digest it easier than if it just stays in the rational mind.

As a young man, I acted in the play, "Billy Budd". I was amazed how much more I was able to get out of the play by acting it rather than just reading the book or simply sitting in the audience. The gestalt experience is similar in that it makes the client a player in the drama of life rather than just being a member of the audience.

There are several "actors" in the gestalt "play": the client, his or her adversaries, and the feelings the client has toward the adversaries. (Actually the feeling becomes the real adversary) There could be many feelings but ultimately and with understanding there will be one main feeling (abandonment) and one main lie (people must feel hurt every time they are let down). And finally, there is the peace within the client.

The therapist is not one of the actors but is the writer, producer, director, and prompter. That is why I think of the therapist as the "coach". The dictionary defines "coach" as "a private tutor or trainer." In a good gestalt session, you are coaching the client toward understanding a truth they already know. The coach just helps the client discovering it.

If it was a matter of learning, the coach would just have them read a book. When you train a person to swim, they have to get in the water. Understanding how to swim comes from inside of the individual. You are the catalyst which enables them to discover the truth.

### **AN EXAMPLE OF A GESTALT SESSION**

The session described below is a compilation of many counseling sessions. It is given to help you look beyond the words of a session to the principles it is based on. This type of session should not be tried by anyone who does not understand the dynamics of Gestalt and the principles it is based on (the principles we have discussed in this and other lessons).

A gestalt session is based on four principles: (1) You must find what you are looking for inside, not outside, of yourself. (2) External thought creates external feelings. (3) Internal thought accesses internal feelings. And (4) We all have an inner peace that we can learn to access.

Gestalt is not an attempt to fix a person by the use of gimmicks. It just sets the stage and gives the client lines to play. How deeply the client becomes involved in the "play" is up to them. The coach (therapist) sits in a room with the client. There are several extra chairs.

Coach: "You are angry with this person. Speak to them as if they were here. See them sitting in that chair. You have been having this dialogue with them inside of yourself. I don't know what it is about, and you probably don't know all of it either. Externalize it. Let's hear it together. What is it you want to say to them?"

Client: "I am really angry with you. You hurt me. You let me down. You were not there for me when I needed you the most."

Coach: "What else?"

Client, "I have felt so hurt because of what you did. I trusted you and you were not there. I am so disappointed in you. You promised. I trusted you."

Coach: "I want you now to separate your feelings of hurt and anger from this person. See your hurt and anger sitting in this other chair. Now speak to your anger. Describe it to me. What does your anger look like? How big is it? What color do you see? Address it by saying, 'You are my anger'."

Client: "You are my anger, and you're big. You are bigger than this room. You are black and red."

Coach: "How intense is it and what shape is it?"

Client: "You are like a sharp pain. You look like a huge black blob."

Coach: "Tell the anger what it does to you, how long it has been with you."

Client: "You hurt me and smother me. I am overwhelmed by you. You have been with me my whole life."

The coach states and then the client repeats: "You are powerful. You control me. I am afraid of you. You don't let me do the things I want to do. You make me do the things I don't want to do. You have been with me my whole life. You own me. You make me feel hurt when I am let down by others. When, in the past, I've been let down by my parents, my family. Now, in my marriage, by my children, by my best friends, by the church."

Coach: "Now I want you to sit in the chair and be your anger."

Coach and then the client: "I am your anger and I am powerful. I control you. I make you do things you don't want to do, and keep you from doing the things you want to do. I can hurt you. You are easy to hurt."

Coach to the anger: "Hurt them."

Together: "I hurt you every time someone lets you down. You feel hurt when your mother lets you down. When your father lets you down. Your family, in your marriage and with your children. Your friends. Your church. The way I trick you is to get you to believe my lie, that people must feel hurt every time they are let down. That's how I trick you. When others let you down, you feel hurt and it's their fault. You are angry with them. When you let others down, they feel hurt and angry with you. It's your fault so you feel guilty. It's very important for you to believe my lie. It would be a terrible thing if you didn't."

Coach to Client's anger: "Why would it be terrible? What would happen to you?"

Client: "I would have to go. I would lose my power."

Coach (to the Client): "Please come back to your chair. Here on your left is Jesus. Say to Him, `Help me Jesus.` Now be the Jesus within you."

Coach and client together: "I am Jesus."

Coach to client: "Can you sense the presence of His peace? How big is your Jesus? Magnify Him."

Client: "Yes, I can feel His presence. He is big, huge."

Coach: "How big?"

Client: "As big as the world."

Coach and client together: "I am Jesus. I know how it is to be let down by others. I have been there. I have been let down by family, my friends, the church. By the whole world for the past two thousand years. You have let me down. But the truth is, I can still be peace, even when others let me down. I know how it is to have people angry with me because they think I have let them down. Family, friends. The Pharisees and Sadducees. For the past two thousand years the whole world, even you, have been angry with me because you all felt I let you down. But the truth is, I can still be peace even when other people are angry with me and think I let them down."

The Truth is, if I felt upset every time someone let me down, I couldn't be who I am supposed to be...peace. If you feel upset every time people let you down, you can't be who you really want to be. The lie is that you have to feel hurt and angry every time you are let down. The truth is you do not have to feel hurt and angry every time you are let down. You can choose who you want to believe...the truth or the lie...me or your anger."

Coach to Client: "Speak to the anger. How large is the anger compared to Jesus?"

Client: "It is small."

Coach: "How small?"

Client: "Like a piece of sand."

Coach "What! That little piece of sand has been haunting you all these years?"

Client laughing. "Yes."

Coach: "What happens when you shine the light of truth on the darkness of the lie?"

Client: "It disappears".

Coach: "Now speak to the other person. I am Jesus. I can be peace even if you let me down, and even if you are angry with me because you think I let you down. The truth is, it is easy for me to be peace when you let me down and it's easy for me to be peace even when you are angry with me, and think I let you down."

Coach: "Now return to your chair. Do you still feel the anger?"

Client: "No, it's gone. I can be at peace."

Coach: "How did you feel when you were sitting in the anger chair?"

Client: "Powerful."

Coach: "How did you feel sitting the Jesus chair?"

Client: "At peace."

Coach: "Who was sitting in that chair?"

Client: "It was Jesus."

Coach: "I saw you sitting there. That was you. It was the presence of Jesus abiding in you. You can be in His presence any time you want to. You make the choice. Believe the truth. Get in touch with His presence. Nothing out there can stop you from being in touch with His peace, which is within you.

Now check your answers and see if you have any change of heart.

#### SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE RESPONSES

1. The pain of abandonment is the first pain everyone feels.

True- According to Dr. Eric Erickson.

2. Being let down can make some people feel hurt.

False- No event can make a person feel anything.

3. Some think they will feel hurt when people let them down.

True. Thought creates our feelings.

4. When others let you down and you feel hurt, it is their fault.

False- Blaming comes when we believe events create feelings.

5. We feel guilty when we let others down, because we blame them for letting us down.

True- It is only fair.

6. People do not have to feel hurt every time they are let down.

True- It all depends on how they are thinking.