

Grave Emotional & Mental Disorders

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"We are all carrying around repressed pain, terror, shame, and rage energy from our childhoods, whether it was twenty years ago or fifty years ago. We have this grief energy within us even if we came from a relatively healthy family, because this society is emotionally dishonest and dysfunctional.

When someone "pushes your buttons," he/she is activating that stored, pressurized grief energy. She/he is gouging the old wounds, and all of the newer wounds that are piled on top of those original wounds by our repeating behavior patterns.

Quote from Codependence: The Dance of Wounded Souls

When I first got into recovery one of the things that I was told was that 'all I had to change was everything'. I had no idea what that meant back then. Now I know that it means that I needed to change my attitudes, beliefs, and definitions about myself and everything in my life. I needed to start surrendering my way of seeing things, of doing life.

One of the first surrenders that I had to make was to let go of doing things 'my way.' (I used to sit in bars and get tears in my eyes over Frank Sinatra's recording because I was also doing it 'My way.') I had to start listening to those weird people who were telling me that I could live without alcohol. Then I had to start letting go of my belief that life was impossible without drugs and alcohol.

Every time I go through a surrender in my recovery I am letting go of some of the ego definitions that have defined my relationship with myself and life. I have to let go of the attitudes and beliefs that I adapted because of the emotional trauma that I suffered as a child (which are still buried in my subconscious until I became willing to look at them.)

There is an old AA saying that, 'AA doesn't open up the gates of heaven and let us in it opens up the gates of hell and lets us out.' What we are let out into is life. The only way that I had known how to deal with life up to that time was to drink and use. The Twelve Steps are a formula for learning how to deal with life in a Spiritual way, and they saved my life.

Unfortunately, the Twelve Steps as practiced in AA are not always enough. Not because the Twelve Step process is not enough - but because the way it is practiced in AA leaves out a vitally important level of healing. That is the level of healing the emotional wounds. We can deal with our grave emotional and mental disorders by having the capacity to be honest with ourselves. That includes being emotionally honest with ourselves. And the only way to achieve emotional honesty is by releasing the grief energy that we are carrying around - the pain, terror, shame, and rage from our childhoods.

Until we deal with our emotional wounds, we do not have the ability to be emotionally honest in the moment. Until we change our relationship with our own emotions it is impossible to be comfortable in our own skins.

Emotional energy manifests in the body. Our attitudes, definitions, and beliefs (subconscious and conscious) dictate our perspective of life and our expectations of ourselves, others, and life. Those perspectives and expectations set us up to react emotionally to life events. If we have not dealt with the old wounds then we will live life in reaction - overreacting (or underreacting to keep from overreacting) - when our 'buttons are pushed.' Our fear of our own reactions determines the quality of our relationships. Until we go back and heal our childhood emotional wounds we cannot successfully change the old tapes - we cannot achieve a healthy, emotionally honest relationship with ourselves and others.

Grave emotional and mental disorders is AA language for Codependence. Codependence is all about having a dysfunctional relationship with self: with our own bodies, minds, emotions, and spirits; with our own gender and sexuality; with being human. Because we have dysfunctional relationships internally we have dysfunctional relationships externally. Because we cannot be emotionally honest with ourselves we aren't really being totally honest with anyone ever.

Bill Wilson would have loved to have had the tools we have available to us today. He would have run to an ACA or CoDA meeting because that is where he could have found the roots of the depression which tormented him.

Codependence Recovery is ninth step work, making amends to ourselves and others by changing the attitudes and behaviors that have caused us to hurt ourselves and others. And we cannot make those amends without owning the feelings. We are powerless to substantially change the behavior patterns in our most intimate relationships without doing the grief work.

Go to Expectations & Serenity

