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Week One: The Family Culture of Abuse

***The way we see the world and face reality**

***“If you were raised in a dysfunctional family, you have, for the most part, been raised to be inauthentic, to lie to yourself and others about what you are feeling and what motivates you. You have been raised to play psychological games with yourself and others.”
Scream Louder (Stepping Out of Chaos) by Marsha Utain, M.S.***

Psychological Abuse

The real abuse is psychological. Whether pain caused to a child is physical, mental, emotional, sexual or neglect the lasting effect from that pain is psychological. Here is it defined by 8 caretaker behaviours.

1. *Rejecting*: The child is avoided or pushed away; he or she is made to feel unworthy, unacceptable, and the like.
2. *Degrading/devaluing*: The child is criticized, stigmatised, deprived of dignity, humiliated, made to feel inferior, and so on.
3. *Terrorizing*: The child is verbally assaulted, frightened, threatened with physical or psychological harm.
4. *Isolating*: The child is deprived of social contacts beyond the family, not allowed friends, kept in a limited area for long periods of time with social interaction.
5. *Corrupting*: The child is “mis-socialized” taught to behave in an antisocial manner, encouraged to develop socially unacceptable interests and appetites.
6. *Exploiting*: The child is taken advantage of, used to meet the needs of his or her caretakers.
7. *Denying essential stimulation, emotional responsiveness, or availability*: The child is deprived of loving, sensitive caregiving; his or her emotional and intellectual development is stifled, the child is generally ignored or neglected.
8. *Unreliable and inconsistent parenting*: Contradictory and ambivalent demands are made of the child, parental support or caregiving is inconsistent and unreliable, and familial stability is denied the child.

Development of a Worldview

We look to the world through an amount of glasses. Every developmental phase gives us a different view of reality. The more traumas take place in successive developmental stages the more complicated the situation becomes.

Did sexual abuse only happen once in for instance the pre-school age, then there is sufficient chance of other phases of development to get a more healthy view on the world. There will be less deformation of a healthy worldview. As the development of the child s still going on, the incest-culture patterns will be more pronounced in adult survivors. It also stimulates us to help children early. Then correction of the wrong elements of this worldview can be made.

The imprint of abuse on a child

Children who grow up in an abusive environment face:

1. Emotional chaos

Sexual relations create a strong binding influence and how the need to grow away from parents and caretakers is frustrated by the binding force of sexual relations.

2. Emotional deprivation

...the lack of emotional food and affirmation with the consequent absence of self-worth and lack of emotional growth. Women need physical touch. Men need verbal affirmation.

3. Social deprivation

To prevent others from discovering what is going on, a closed family system evolves, with strong rules about silence and secrecy. The secret world which binds such a family together also hinders a child from absorbing values which they otherwise might observe in others. This increases the effect of the shaping power of parental values.

4. The danger of repeated abuse

Abusers often misread children's body language and developing sexuality. They put a meaning on it which the child does not intend.

5. The danger of becoming abusers themselves

The attempts to master a trauma through reliving it over and over again is one way through which abuse survivors get control over their life and emotions. This can also result in actually reliving the child abuse trauma by becoming an abuser! There is also some evidence that victims of *parental* sexual abuse have a greater risk of becoming abusers themselves.

(p. 74 from Shame to Peace)

Dysfunctional relationship structures

In a normal family, children grow up to become individuals who know what it means to come together with others. Individuality is important to be a good team player. Individual boundaries are not the same in every culture. The development of our personality has much to do with the amount of personal freedom our culture values. In a dysfunctional relationship power is used to keep the dysfunctional system values, and allows the authoritarian to stay in power.

Dysfunctional System

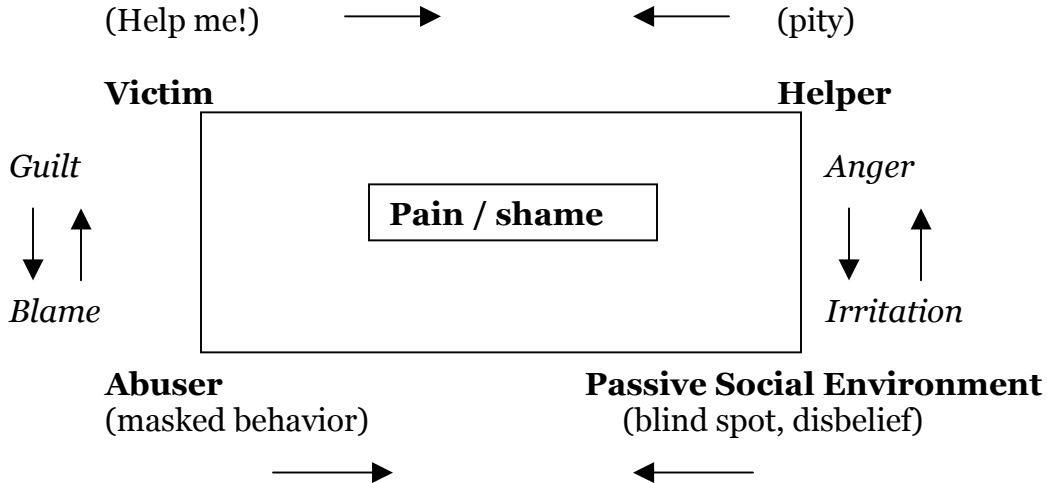
- Conditional love - you're not allowed to be you, be who I need you to be
- Closed System - there is no way out of the family, you're not allowed to leave, nor would you know how to leave, relationships are a tangled mess with no clear boundaries.
- Strict Rules – there are said and unsaid family rules that must be obeyed or members will be punished and shamed. It's all about power, not respect. (ie. -the abuser will act one way to everyone else and one way at home, necessitating secrecy and a don't talk rule)
- Different roles - abuser, victim, helper, passive onlooker. Bullying is seen as normal, it can be brute force or subtle through quiet manipulation or illness. If the family is religious then the religion will be abusive, it will be used against you as a weapon, if you don't do what you're told, God will punish you.

Family factors in relation to the incest-culture.

1. A closed family
2. A Dominating person.
3. A child with much sense of responsibility, especially towards the dominating person.

When these three roles are the only 'normal' life a child knows, it can be understood that there will be shifts from one position to the other. Thus a child in a divorce situation can turn abusive to one or both parents. The parents, feeling sorry, can feel and act like a victim, allowing the child the role of power. This model also explains how it is possible that victims of sexual abuse can become abusers themselves, either within the family or with younger children. In time some of them can turn into adult molesters of children.

Dysfunctional Families vs. Functional Families



Abuser to victim: is based on blame, refuses responsibility for actions, uses manipulation whether brute force: creates fear with aggression (loud, shouting, violent behavior) or subtle manipulation through illness, etc. Shames the others, “It’s your fault.” Abuses to get needs met, but does not openly communicate about it.

Victim to Abuser: the victim feels guilty about making the abuser do what they do. Can also be powerful and control or manipulate through “helplessness”.
 -suffers directly
 -feels helpless and powerless
 -is the first one to feel the pressure of the cycle
 -self pity, hopelessness, despair
 -manipulates to get help, can guilt the helper, then helper becomes victim and victim becomes the abuser. If the helper says no, the system views them as the bad guy and most likely another will step into the role.

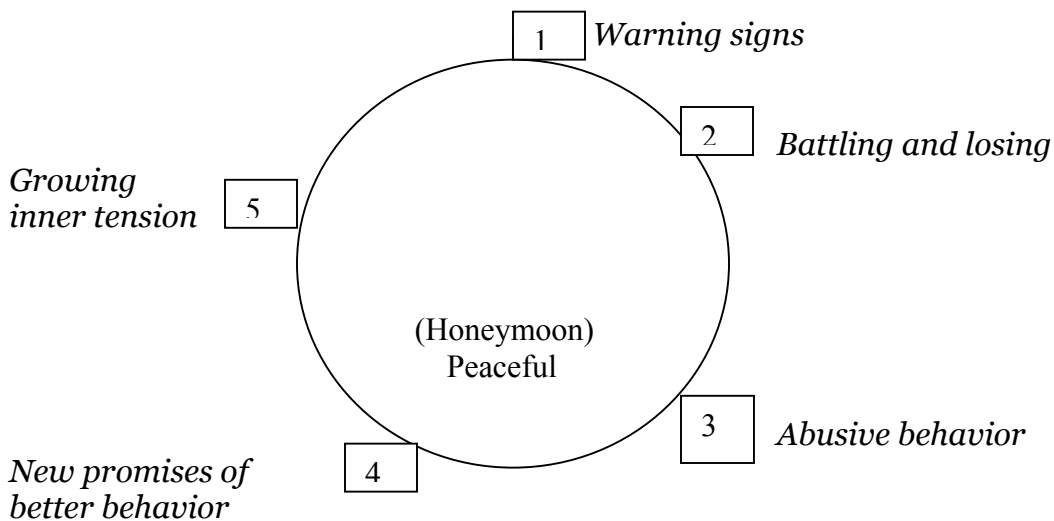
Enabler: The helper feels a sense of pity and enables the victim to continue to suffer the abuse, through the support they give. They encourage, care, give up self, a favorite position of Christians (take up my cross), their identity is linked to helping. They depend on the helping to define them. It keeps the system going. They try to prevent an outburst from happening. Keeps the abuser from taking the consequences of actions.

For all: It is exhausting. Everyone uses the power they have to meet their needs in some way. No one shares real feelings or shame. No one takes responsibility for these real emotions. Everyone tries to avoid real (deep) feelings, so they stay in the role. It takes so much energy to survive and so much to leave the system and there is no guarantee the next will be better so it’s easier to stay. Appearance rather than reality is the all important image to maintain.

Dysfunctionalism: the abuse of power

The root of the problem in dysfunctional systems is the abuse of power, either brute force or subtle manipulations. The over-powering presence of the abuser makes it difficult for a child to grow up into a mature individual. When we look back again at the relationship quadrant, we can see how the parent-helper (enabler) position can mean that mother will attempt to keep the dysfunctional family going, even if she suspects incest. Where would she turn if she decided to walk out with her children?

family cycle of pain



The period between 3 and 4 is seen as ore peaceful by the family

Functional system – Healthy Family

In comparison to the dysfunctional system – here you are allowed to be who you are.

- Unconditional love – there's lots of grace when sin or failure is encountered with a willingness to forgive oneself or each other when needed – there are paths to restoration and repair.
- Open and flexible system -boundaries are allowed with increasing freedom as the children get older with warm support.
- No strict rules – might be changed if necessary - honesty is a strong antidote against dysfunctional patterns in which appearance has a higher value than truth.
- Freedom and acceptance - aim is for mutual growth, allowing a balance between individualism and togetherness.
- Mutual respect - power is used to benefit the whole group.
- Honesty concerning facts and feelings -can and should be strong convictions, not everyone needs to agree.
- Everybody is allowed to maintain and develop his unique personality “unity in diversity”.

From the dysfunctional to the functional system

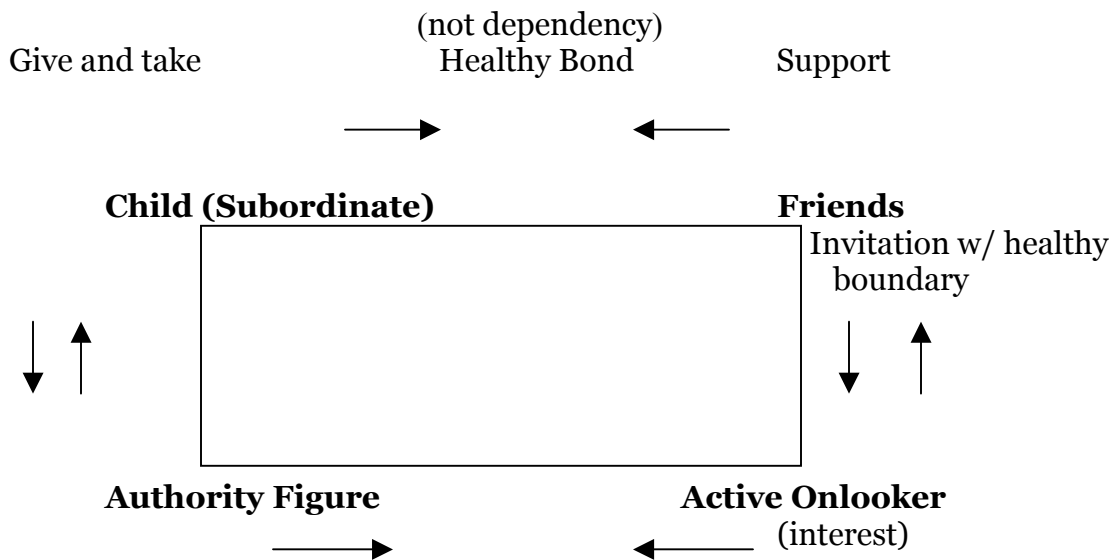
Love it, leave it or change it

-love it: stay but know you are spiritual free even if you're socially bound

-leave it: the system will view the leaving person as the abuser

-change it: fitting intervention, being different, not radically but somewhat within a dysfunctional system. It will create tension though because it disrupts the standard flow.

Functional System



Different roles in the functional system

Authority figure (parents, teacher...)

Provides comfort, safety, growing space
Children can leave and return to this secure place
Use their authority to protect so others can grow and develop
Does not view the child growing up as a threat
(if you view your child as a threat you become an abuser)
sees the good and blesses development
a teenagers job is to free themselves of the closeness and then they can return to it.

Subordinate person (child, pupil...)

-knows what good behavior is, it's clearly defined
-understands that adults can make mistakes

Friends

Offer support but with healthy boundaries.

Active onlooker

Ie. like a church evangelizing - reaching out to teenagers, there is a continually invitation but freedom for them to come or not come. They are not condemned if they choose not to come.

Comparison Chart

Functional system

Who you are is good

Allowed to be self

Grace for failure

Allowed to forgive self

Ways to repair relationships

Boundaries increase w/ age
With warm support

Rules can change as necessary

Open and flexible system

Boundaries change as needed

Honesty and real feelings valued

Allowed to disagree with each other

Reality is valued

Allowed to come and go

Mutual Respect

Unity in Diversity

Freedom of Choice

Discipline is to Train child
(consistent)

Freedom and Acceptance

Ruled by Respect

Dysfunctional

when you meet my need, you're okay

Be who I need you to be

Blame and guilt even when no failure

Blamed by others, so self-blame is good

No way to fix mistakes

Children are not allowed to grow up

Strict rules

Suspicion of life outside the family

Boundaries are a tangled mess, unclear

Roles and expected behavior valued

All must maintain the same family myth

Appearance is valued

Punished if you try to leave.

Power maintained through shame

Don't challenge the accepted norm

We will tell you what's right and wrong
(and what God wants from you)

Punishment when you damage my image
(unpredictable)

Control and guilt

Ruled by Roles

Week Two: Dealing with Pain and Memories

*survival lifestyle, dissociation, *flashbacks, memories

Put on Jesus!! So negative can be shook off like water off a duck's back

survival lifestyle

-problem focused and emotional focused ways of coping

The child will try different ways to escape a problem depending on age and personality. If physical escape is impossible then emotional means such as crying will be attempted. If these don't work then the mind will give another – denial.

-denial

Denial is the ability to live in two different worlds that don't intersect, something like Batman. Your mind allows you to function at both in order to survive.

-creating your own pain

The body has an ability to drown out one pain with another. Someone trying to escape the pain of withdrawal might stab themselves, then the pain of withdrawal goes to the background behind the pain of the wound. It is a way to cope. A survivor can drown the existing pain through intense emotions (self-mutilation, various kinds of addiction, suicidal behavior, or seeking intense feelings). In time, intense emotions can change into numbness. Pain is bad, but to not feel anything is worse! As one girl described it, 'When I slash my arms with a knife, then at least I have the feeling I'm still alive...'

-accommodation to the wishes and needs of others

Denial of one's own needs, for the sake of peace in order to avoid even more serious consequences if one says, 'No'. This denial can take an extra twist in committed Christians who, by denial of their personal needs (thus escaping the pain of reality), constantly pour out their lives for others, causing a 'saviour complex'.

-suicidal tendencies

The battle to survive is often laced with moments of such despair that death looks appealing. It is quite common for the normally strong will to survive to slip into reverse and become suicidal.

-introvert and extrovert responses to a survival lifestyle

Introverts tend toward stoic silence. This silence can be filled with anything between happy fantasies and dark, inner emptiness. That latter takes the form of a trance-like state in which one loses time. Extroverts often take charge of a situation through noise and laughter. Where introverts tend to accommodate, extroverts become manipulative in order to achieve their goals by any means. Introvert Christians with a survival lifestyle also turn more easily to mystical, inner experiences than do extrovert persons. Extroverts with a survival lifestyle in Christian leadership positions are prone to becoming authoritarian, while introverts tend to let themselves be used and ruled.

-mental absence

Through various mental absence techniques, one can cope better with reality and avoid the pain of memories. When tensions become too high, one's mind wanders off to better places. When such evasions of reality are needed frequently because of bad circumstances, and fantasy is either too tiresome or insufficient to kill the pain, mental nothingness, staring into emptiness, can be a place of escape.

During sex one can go shopping, or count the nails on the ceiling or books on the shelf. This divine created ability for worship has become after the Fall an ability to dissociate: a strong focus, upon anything BUT God.

The difference between dissociation and worship.

We are created for worship, thus worship is healthy. It helps us to place the other reality central: the world of God and His Being and Truth. Through this we receive the power to face painful realities and we are able to live in them. We know of the witnessing of martyrs, such as those who were burned on the stake, that they did not seem to have pain and died singing. That seems also to have been Stephan's experience (Acts 6:54-56). Worship thus is an uplifting experience that helps us face reality, while dissociation is an escape of reality.

God also has given us the ability to worship. This too can work as a painkiller. As we worship we focus on God in such a way that it is possible to forget our circumstances. That ability to worship is still with us after the Fall, although it is damaged. (Rom. 1:19-21). The bible calls us to become loose from the fixation on earthly things and to develop a 'stereo' experience: there is the earthly reality and there is a spiritual reality. By focusing on the spiritual reality more, we can get a spiritual view of our experiences (Col.3: 1-5). This focus on God helps us to change learned 'earthly' patterns. The apostle Paul experienced this so strongly that he did not know if he had an experience of 'being outside' his body or that it happened while he was actually there (2 Cor. 12:3).

The need for revenge

The Lord knew that people needed to deal with the past and have them rights to exact the same thing from their abusers as what happened to them. This approach of 'an eye for an eye', the need for revenge is enshrined in the Old Testament as correct. Jesus has changed that. The Bible tells us to 'give our revenge needs to God' (Rom. 12:17-21). He can revenge us better than anyone! Next to that the government has a task to punish people for what they did (Rom. 13: 1,2).

Memories

Feelings without understanding. When a young child experiences sexual feelings they have no name for them or experience for what has happened to them. It is usually mixed with attention and tenderness from someone they want to please. Thus a rather friendly uncle, who sexually touches a child, can cause strange reactions: the child is not aware of these feelings, they are new, but uncle is so nice... Only much later does the girl understand what happened. Then she feels betrayed and as she gets older she needs to deal with the realization at each new phase of development.

There is also the possibility of a ***fragmented memory***: a child experiences something so intense and can't handle the emotion. The thought: this is not real; this is impossible, can then serve as a defence mechanism. Especially when a child is younger than 4 or 5 years they can create an 'invisible friend'. This can be a fun situation, but also an escape route from traumatic experiences: this is not happening to me, it is happening to my friend. In that case a fragmentation of the personality can be the result.

Flashbacks are unexpected and usually unwanted memories, which suddenly appear, and make that it seems as if the past is happening again. It is as if it is happening again on a different wavelength. They can be triggered by any of the senses including touch. The cells in our skin have a memory-capacity. We can also understand that Paul says: 'all sins happen outside the body except sexual sins' (1 Cor. 6:18). I believe that this is the reason that the body can remember what the mind does not know (anymore). I know of one situation in which a girl who was often beaten in her youth started to remember and talk about it and her skin turned blue again.

Suppressed memories are often found in people who have had early childhood sexual trauma. There are true stories from people who finally remember what 20, 30 or even 40 years ago happened. In the literature of child sexual abuse, about 50% of the people do not remember their abuse.

When the memory is vague

The effects of trauma can be treated without knowing exactly what has happened. It is the difference between objective and subjective truth. What the client experienced subjectively has hurt her or him. Whether the event can be proven objectively or not the pain signals some injury that needs to be dealt with.

The sting of the memory can be taken away. It does not mean that the memory of the trauma has disappeared, but it has become encapsulated by the Peace of God (Philip.4: 6-8). Just like when a bullet is lodged in a bone, and can't be operated, a sack is formed around it, insulating the body from the metal. It is possible to remember, but a filter - the Peace of God, stands between the event and yourself.

For the helper:

Where do we begin?

-affirm the positive (they survived! they are an amazing person!)

-cleanse what is wrong, keeping the good

anger is good and needed but with boundaries

-as memories come up, invite the Lord to show where He was and the truth (survivors have been so lied to and blamed they have a hard time believing they are not to blame, when the Lord speaks a healing word it can undo these lies)

-break down unbiblical learned patterns and values

I am obligated to give whatever someone asks for.

Everything bad that happens is my fault.

I am not allowed to feel anger or let others be responsible for their choices.

I must protect others from the truth.

I have no choice, no options. I am trapped. There is no way out.

Managing anger

When someone is in a rage, it is helpful to encourage them to open their hands, as it is close to impossible to stay angry when the hands are relaxed...Also give them some water to drink and let them change body position. These three have helped me in 99% of the anger explosions.

Holy Indifference

I introduced to her the idea of a 'fog', a kind of 'holy indifference, 'a divine ego-trip'. It would make her less sensitive to the situation.

I demonstrated how to pray for this and simply asked God to give her this 'fog'. What I meant was a high concentration of the presence of God to enable her to live in the present, and a lessening of the obsession with (her past). Weeks later she called me to say that it was still working and that she could pray for it whenever she needed it. This calmed her down enough to learn to show anger and demonstrate her freedom to go where she wanted.

Evelyn kept looking for a solution, for situations and things to change. What she needed to discover was the uniqueness of the gospel of Jesus; that he meets us where we are.

From Shame to Peace by Teo Van Der Weele p. 168-171

If necessary, pray for a 'holy indifference' or a 'divine mist', for the painful reality, which they have to go back to, to become less harrowing. The meaning of this prayer really is that the attention is shifted from a problem to the Presence of Jesus.

Pearl Diving (Teo Van Der Weele)

Pearl divers

A pearl is a piece of jewelry of great value. It originates in the body of the pearl oyster or pearl shell. It is estimated that one in every thousand oysters contains a pearl. Pearl fishers can be found in India and in countries around the Persian Gulf, among others. They sail at approximately 6 to 10 km from the coast. The pearl diver is lowered on a rope, with a big stone attached to it. He collects oysters in a basket. The divers remain under water for an average of 50 to 80 seconds. One of the difficulties is, that in certain waters they must be on guard for sharks.

Pearl diving in our lives

We can also go pearl diving in our lives, i.e. that we take a moment to look for perhaps small, but 'valuable' experiences in our lives. Such a valuable experience could be e.g. a conversation with someone that made you feel very good or if you have experienced God in a special way. Maybe you did something that you had never done before and which you could not have done a year ago. Maybe you have gained some new insights about yourself, others or God that may have put you on a new surprising track in your life.

How exactly?

Take a quiet moment, maybe at the end of each day or once a week, arrange it so that it is best for you, and look back at the period behind you. And ask yourself: 'What positive and new things have happened?'

'What new insights have I gained?'

Write it down so you don't forget. Then when you read it all again after months or years, you will probably discover some clear indications of what God is doing in your life. It doesn't need to be a long diary of all your experiences and emotions, but rather of the short and concise way of writing down your pearls.

Difficulty in the beginning

It will probably take some time and effort in the beginning because we aren't used to looking for pearls, we quickly forget them when they do happen and we don't fully understand the pearls' meaning and value.

What is a pearl for you may not be for someone else. It might take some time to decide what were pearls. If we have been in the habit of being focused on the negative it will feel like we need to twist our brain in a new direction. Maybe we belittle the compliments we receive or push the positive into the background. Pearl diving could then be a new way of looking at your life.

Remembering

Ps. 103:2 *'Praise the Lord, O my soul; and forget not all His benefits'*

In the Bible the great deeds of God are written down, which He has done for His people Israel. God's deeds and miracles were sung in hymns. For the people of Israel to be reminded of it and keep them focused on God. When they were in trouble, when fear, uncertainty and doubt seemed to rule them, they had the choice to drown in the fear or to reach back to His word and sing songs, in order to be reminded again about God. Thus they were constantly being reminded of what He had done for them. This way they were able to climb out of the valley and get both feet on solid ground again.

What Pearl diving does for us

When you look at your collected pearls, the following questions could arise:

- What is God doing in my life?
- What does He want to tell me through this?
- What is He teaching me?
- Where am I in my growth process?
- Did I advance? Am I growing? Or am I still the same person like 5 years ago?
- What is God blessing in me?
- Which direction am I heading for?
- Am I happy with that?

Often there is a clear relationship between what God is teaching you and what this could mean for others around you. It is my experience that with what I learn I can help others who I encounter. This is not an accident. You receive and give it to others. The blessing is not just a blessing for me but also for others.

Every time when you consider a positive experience and thank God for that, you allow this to work as a positive building block for your personality. Your self-confidence about depending on God, will grow. You connect the dots between individual positive experiences and watch what is taking shape. It is like someone said: 'it is like the creation of islands in a swamp. You connect these islands with bridges, in order to make it suitable to build '

Limits to the effect of Pearl diving

This approach is not meant to dismiss what goes wrong and that we should suppress negative reality. The opposite is true: we need to learn from it. Sometimes one has to deal with negative issues first. Feeling pain and sadness is natural and a normal part of the healing process. We need to give ourselves permission to feel pain. It is also possible to become focused on experiences rather than the objective truth of the word of God. Positive experiences can be a great encouragement but we should not depend on them. Pearl diving should not be a substitute for hearing the voice of God, it is just a first step.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Symptoms (PTSD):

- frequent “re-experience of the trauma through recurrent negative images, memories, nightmares, or thoughts
- dread or fear that the event will happen again
- distress or helplessness when exposed to “reminders” of the trauma
- avoidance of those reminders or of people, places and sensations associated with trauma (even feeling good or safe).
- hopelessness about the past, present and future
- decreased or increased physical/mental activity
- survivors may suffer from:
 - insomnia
 - constant agitation
 - angry outbursts
 - impaired concentration
 - hyper-vigilance
 - increased sensitivity (includes an extreme startle response)
- Feeling emotionally numb, anxious, weakness, exhaustion, muscle stiffness or concentration problems.
- Feeling overwhelmed by what would normally be considered everyday situations and diminished interest in performing normal tasks or pursuing usual interests.
- Crying uncontrollably
- Isolating oneself from family and friends and avoiding social situations.
- Relying increasingly on alcohol or drugs to get through the day.
- Feeling extremely moody, irritable, angry, suspicious, or frightened.
- Having difficulty falling or staying asleep, sleeping too much and experiencing nightmares.
- Feeling guilty about surviving the event or being unable to solve the problem, change the event, or prevent the disaster.
- Feeling fears and a sense of doom about the future.

- Psychiatric problems such as depression, dissociation (losing conscious awareness of the “here and now”) or another anxiety disorder like panic disorder.

- Self-destructive behavior including: Alcohol or drug abuse, Suicidal tendencies
High risk behavior – risky driving, High risk sexual behavior (HIV or pregnancy).

Physical complaints, any or all of which may be accompanied by depression, including: unaccounted for chronic pain/chronic fatigue syndrome/fibromyalgia
Stomach pain or other digestive problems such as irritable bowel syndrome
Eating disorder
Breathing problems or asthma
Headaches
Muscle cramps or aches such as low back pain
Cardiovascular problems

How to deal with flashbacks:

Read about it, it is a normal reaction, you're not crazy

websites:

www.giftfromwithin.org

www.ptsdinfo.org

www.adaa.org

Triggers

Triggers can come through any sense (sight, smell, touch, sound or tastes) at any time, keep a list of triggers so become aware and cleanse the triggers.

You don't need to take every invitation to go into a flashback, it takes practice and discipline, but you're allowed to refuse to go there unless you are ready.

How to manage them

- keep eyes open – it's harder to go back in a memory if your eyes are open
- look around the room and describe in detail what is there, speak out loud
- breathe deeply – physically we can't breathe deeply and stay panicked
- wiggle your toes, feel the floor under you
- feel the seat under you
- touch the arm of the chair
- use your eyes to look actively around the room and get oriented
- blink your eyes
- get up and move around
- stretch the body, try to become aware of it's sensations
- get up and get a drink of water

Talk to yourself:

I have already lived through the events

What I am experiencing now are the feelings and memories

I have survived the event, I will survive the feelings

I am safe now

Where is God?

He is here with me here and now, I can hide in Him and let Him face this.

If it happens in therapy let the therapist know so they can help ground you.

Do you want the therapist to touch your hand to help bring you back to reality?

Can you distance yourself from it and move it to a TV screen and watch it instead of reliving it?

Can a safe place be created that can be retreated to?

Can a wall of peace be put between you and the memory?

Can you hide in God?

Week Three: The Healing Process

Recommended Books:

Safe People by Cloud and Townsend (relationships)

A Door of Hope by Jan Frank (recovering from trauma)

Why betrayal leads to self-hatred

Recovering from a Trauma

Establishing Safety

Take with you: anti-shame program, blessing the body, Light Bath

How do I tell if I'm in a safe relationship?

What are my needs?

Whose responsibility are they?

How do I ask for them to be met?

and if they say no?

When am I allowed to be angry?

Am I free to be myself with this person?

or am I just there to meet their needs?

Am I allowed to say no?

Are my boundaries respected?

Is who I am important?

Is what I want important?

Do I give because I want to? (not because of manipulation)

manipulation = If I'm afraid of doing something because of someone's emotional reaction then I am being manipulated.

I don't feel obligated, I don't owe them anything they want from me or need.

I tell what I want, I don't have to share everything.

Dysfunctionalism: lack of boundaries

A dysfunctional family is like a house with thin walls. Whatever happens in the other rooms (the lives of the people in the family) influences the others deeply. The unwritten rule is then that one should feel what is expected without having to be told.

Betrayal spoils my discernment

A child needs trustworthy people in its growth towards adulthood.

Sexual boundary crossing by an abuser is a betrayal of that trust.

People in authority have turned out to be untrustworthy.

Distrust of adults is thus common sense!

But a child needs trust worthy care-givers who will mirror back good in order for the child to feel good about themselves and develop a healthy self-confidence.

The child needs the good so they can develop a sense of who not to trust.

Now the signals are confused. Good adults are not trustworthy.

How can I tell a good adult from a bad?

A Child's Perspective trying to make sense of abuse

1. I am being hurt, emotionally or physically, by a parent or other trusted adult.
2. Based on how I think about the world thus far, this injury can only be due to one of two things: Either I am bad or my parent is.
3. I have been taught by other adults, either at home or in school, that parents (adults) are always right, and always do things for you own good (any other alternative is very frightening). When they occasionally hurt you, it is for you own good, because you have been bad. This is called punishment.
4. Therefore, it must be my fault that I am being hurt, just as my parent says. This must be punishment. I must deserve this.
5. Therefore, I am as bad as whatever is done to me (the punishment must fit the crime: anything else suggests parental badness, which I have rejected). I am bad because I have been hurt. I have been hurt because I am bad.
6. I am hurt quite often, and/or quite deeply, therefore I must be very bad.

-leads to passivity, self-blame, low self-esteem (lack of confidence)

Depression is the most common symptom reported among adults molested as children.

p. 29 Child Abuse Trauma by John N. Briere

Healing from a Trauma

p. 133 The Core Experiences of psychological trauma are disempowerment and disconnection from others. Recovery, therefore, is based upon the empowerment of the survivor the creation of new connections. Recovery can take place only within the context of relationships; it cannot occur in isolation. In her renewed connections with other people , the survivor re-creates the psychological faculties that were damaged or deformed by the traumatic experience.

The first principle of recovery is the empowerment of the survivor. She must be the author and arbiter of her own recovery. Others may offer advice, support, assistance, affection, and care, but not cure. Many benevolent and well-intentioned attempts to assist the survivor founder because this fundamental principle of empowerment is not observed.

In subsequent sessions, as Irene told her story, her symptoms gradually abated. She began to take more action to protect herself, mobilizing her friends and family, and finding more effective ways to get help from the police. Though she reviewed her new strategies with her therapist, she developed them primarily on her own initiative.

p. 155 Recovery unfolds in three stages. The central task of the first stage is the establishment of safety. The central task of the second state is remembrance and mourning. The central task of the third stage is reconnection with ordinary life. Like any abstract concept, these stages of recovery are a convenient fiction, not to be taken too literally.

p. 150 Trauma robs the victim of a sense of power and control; the guiding principle of recovery is to restore power and control to the survivor. The first task of recovery is to establish the survivor's safety. This task takes precedence over all others, for no other therapeutic work can possibly succeed if safety has not been adequately secured.

p. 175 In the second stage of recovery, the survivor tells the story of the trauma. She tells it completely, in depth and in detail. This work of reconstruction actually transforms the traumatic memory, so that it can be integrated into the survivor's life story.

p. 196 Having come to terms with the traumatic past, the survivor faces the task of creating a future. She has mourned the old self that the trauma destroyed; now she must develop a new self. Her relationships have been tested and forever changed by the trauma; now she must develop new relationships. The old beliefs that gave meaning to her life have been challenged; now she must find anew a sustaining faith. These are the tasks of the third stage of recovery. In accomplishing this work, the survivor reclaims her world.

***Trauma and Recovery* by Judith Lewis Herman, M.D.**

Establishing Safety

When trauma has occurred the sense of safety has been destroyed. To restore it there needs to be very practical considerations. One must feel physically safe to be able to process emotionally. When that is taken care of then emotional well being needs to be built up. A trauma robs us emotionally. Our emotional account is quickly emptied trying to go on with normal life and keep a lid on the turmoil underneath the surface. So we need to deposit into the account. Here are some ways to take care of yourself emotionally.

Protect yourself from unsafe people.

Deal with the shame with the truth that 'it was not my fault'.

Deal with the false guilt by assigning the abuser the responsibility. It is his crime.

Deal with the fear by securing safety for yourself.

Pray peace on your body and bless it to help it relax and be restored.

Focus on the Lord in worship knowing that He has suffered and understands.

Jesus is safe.

Learn to pamper and love your body instead of hating it. It is not the enemy.

It's not your fault that your body remembers the trauma or felt pleasure in the midst of the abuse. It is programmed to do that.

Cleanse your body through Light Baths. (next page)

Give your body new good memories through the anti-shame program. (next page)

Give yourself permission to be proud of yourself for the hard work you are doing in receiving healing and working through your emotions. It is hard work!!

Let yourself feel whatever bubbles up. There are no bad emotions.

Let yourself (safely) express the anger you have a right to.

Learn to trust your instincts and intuition. Listen to your heart.

Honor your needs, don't despise them. You are allowed to be needy.

Listen to and receive encouragement, friends may see you better than you do.

Treat yourself with the same respect that God treats you. He respects your choice.

Choose to maybe trust another and let them help you carry this pain.

Learn to work through the overwhelming pain and not run from it.

Learn to have dignity about your past instead of shame. You survived a lot.

Receive grace and compassion from God's heart for your suffering.

Go pearl diving (last week) looking for the positive in the midst of the muck of your past.

Forgive yourself for being weak.

Decide if you want to enroll in the school of forgiveness.

Story of Lisi and the school of forgiveness

What good thing have you held back from yourself, considering yourself not worthy of it? Is it time to bless yourself?

Anti-Shame Program

Phase One

- listen to worship (or some other beautiful) music in the shower
- work up to 20 minutes in the shower - enjoying it
(when you're not enjoying it get out, gradually add more time, don't push)
- use a good body lotion because the skin will dry out
- when you have built up to 20 minutes in the shower move onto the next phase

Phase Two

- do 8-10 minutes in the shower
- listen to worship music in shower and in bed
- put flannel sheets on the bed (because they are warmer)
- lay naked between the sheets (to feel your skin better)
- there are four positions you can lay in: left, right, on the stomach, on the back
- work up to laying in each position for 20 minutes, if it gets too tense after a few minutes get up, it needs to be a pleasant experience, so stop when it's too much.
- don't try to do it all in one day.
- through this you learn to relax in your body
- hum along with the worship music, if you're allergic to worship music, use some other type of beautiful music like maybe classical.

Phase Three

- make sure the room is warm use a heater if needed
- lay naked on the bed with no top sheet
- wiggle your toes often to stay present and not leave body (dissociate)
- worship
- work up to 20 minutes
- do it 2-3 times

Final Phase

- spend some time looking at your body in a full length mirror and tell yourself what you like about it (not for 20 minutes) 😊
- do it 2-3 times

Reward: buy two sets of expensive underwear – 5X the normal price because then you will feel like the princess or prince that you are.

The light bath

One way to cleanse memories is through a light bath. This is based on 1 John 1: 5-9. Ask God to walk with you through your body and to decide to turn on the Light in Jesus name, this will make cleansing very personal. Start with your toes and go part by part through your body asking the Lord to cleanse each part of it. It may trigger memories that you can ask the Lord to cleanse. Do it often to bring a new realization that your body is cleansed. Remember Jesus said: It's not what goes into a body that makes it unclean, it's what is in the heart.

Blessing your body Teo Van der Weele

In prayer, focus blessing especially on specific parts of your body. We know that the brain is a miracle in it self. The peace of God can have a tremendous effect. I have seen how a person in the Intensive Care responded to quiet prayer. Her dangerously high blood pressure went down as I just stood there, with the nurse who looked sheepishly, since I was not allowed to pray out loud. 'It was too dangerous to cause more emotions'!

Sometimes I have felt led to pray for restoration of the functioning of the bridge between the two brain parts. I don't know what happens but I do know that the brain does suffer consequences of traumatic experiences and it seems something to do with the brain. In any case, the peace of God can heal, even if we don't understand or even if we pray 'not too correct'. At times I bless the hormonal system which is regulated by the brain. I often pray for the brain: bless the blood vessels and lymph system to do their cleaning job, get all the stress toxins out. Also at times I bless the liver and kidneys to do their cleaning job!

Sometimes I pray for the muscle which covers the skull, as this often suffers due to high tension (due to clenched teeth in anger or high concentration).

The nose is a member which can be damaged through a psychological inner choice: I will not smell this anymore. I have had different clients who had trouble with smelling.

The backbone is a place where many memories can be locked. It can cause problems to breath. When I notice that someone breathes very superficially I bless the lungs and tell them that they should work normally as God has planned it. Often anger is located in the lower back, but this does not mean that anyone who has lower back pain, is angry! I often bless the spine including the upper part (the neck) for restoration of the will.

Jaws: for restoration of the muscle tone, muscles which are to tight to be released and muscles which are to weak become strengthened.

Feet: to follow Jesus, even if the head does not understand what the feet want to do: just let them lead you. It is also an encouragement for the intuition to function. The same is true for the skin (it's the 'third kidney') hairs, stand straight up, give goose bumps, give an uneasy feeling, this is also an encouragement for the intuitive feelings to work on the body!

Stomach: often anger and fear is related to the stomach. Anger tenses the stomach up, fear often releases this tension, but then gives cramps.

Week Four: The Grieving Process & Finding Relief

Prayer room from 8-9

Article: Childhood Sexual Abuse and Loss: An Overview of Grief and Its Complications for Survivors By Helen Fitzgerald and Lana R. Lawrence

Reclaiming my will

Take Home: will exercises, expressing anger, Esther program

An overview of the steps of the grieving process

Phase I. Identifying and Acknowledging the Loss. Phase I begins when the memory or recognition of the loss begins to creep into conscious awareness. This may happen shortly after the loss has occurred, or it may take years for a person to acknowledge the loss, even if the loss has been remembered all along.

Phase II: Experiencing the Pain. Phase II of the grief process is the most difficult and quite possibly the most frightening. The many emotions that surface are strong. It is not unusual to feel disoriented and to fear losing control of one's feelings. Sometimes grief may be subtle and manageable; at other times, it may feel explosive and frightening. Emotions may emerge slowly, or they may seem to come all at once.

Phase III. Readjusting to the Loss. Readjusting to the loss may be seen as the third phase of grief. After having gone through the pain of the previous phases, people who have experienced a loss realize that they have shed old feelings and behaviors and are learning new ways to express themselves. This is usually a time of developing new boundaries for oneself and may involve learning how to say "no!" in uncomfortable situations.

Phase IV. Reinvesting Emotional Energy. Once Phase IV is reached, healing is well established; those who have experienced loss may be exploring new environments, relationships, and activities. By this time, survivors who have developed a broader primary support system and have expressed many of the painful emotions associated with the abuse will be able to recall previous traumatic experience(s) and subsequent losses with far less emotion and pain than before.

Phase V. Reconciling the Loss. The final phase of the grieving process is optional. Phase V may be seen as the readiness or desire of many survivors to share with others the knowledge and self-assurance that they have gained in the process of grieving. What can - and often does - happen is that a survivor wants to become involved in activities such as helping others by forming support groups, educating others about abuse and its effects, volunteering time for hotlines or victim assistance programs, or furthering their education to work in a related helping profession.

Dysfunctional Development of the Will

Selectively developed will

the child got to do exactly what they wanted in particular areas, but had to submit completely in incest situations.

Broken will

The child experienced normal development of the will as a toddler, but later on became involved in an incest situation. They are aware of the possibility of their own will, but they cannot exercise it, as any attempt to use the will is crushed again and again.

Stubborn and Rebellious

Some who are in the healing phase appear to be hard, stubborn and rebellious. Each of these forms of will development has to do with the urge to survive.

It seems that dysfunctionality tends to create extreme 'will' responses.

extrovert

Obviously, an extrovert, because of the expressiveness of that personality trait, will either be in constant trouble, or they will try habitually to create an atmosphere of normality and to cover things up through jokes, excitement and activity.

introvert

The quiet introvert can become even more silent, or turn deliberately extrovert, but this is a kind of acting. A child who was formerly extroverted can suddenly become introverted as happened to Beth Moore.

Will exercises:

What do I want to do?

What do I enjoy doing?

If I were to spend three hours a day doing only what I wanted, what would it be?

Could I possibly do that twice a week? Could my work be done by another?

Am I feeling what others are feeling or what I am feeling?

Am I doing what I want to do or what is best for others?

Expressing anger:

The Power of Journaling – getting the pain out! Talking, telling the story.

Exercise, finding a good place to scream all the energy out, hitting a pillow

Intercession for people suffering what you did.

Getting mad at your counselor or teacher or some other safe person – for practice. It's easier to be mad at someone safe first.

Healing Memories

Counseling: uncovers the darkness or blindness – discovers what needs healing.
Healing: God does the fixing of the wound.

We were designed to stand up straight before God, so that we would bring Father God into everything we do like Jesus did, even at age 12. But we get bent towards things: ideas, positions, relationships, safety, protection, value.

We go back to the memory that binds us, to undo it so we can grow. In a home there can be impossibly high standards (perfectionism) or the other extreme of abuse or neglect (shame). Our history is our perceptions. Our perceptions are healed and we see God there in our past.

Perfectionism - when the Father wound is not healed it becomes religious, trying to do right.

Shame - I'm not desirable, I'm no good. If Mom and Dad don't like me, there's something wrong with me - because a 5 or 6 year old will never think the parent is weird. The child needs self-protection so they harden their heart. They build a fortress. A wall of thoughts and imagination. Shame binds – symptoms blossom – anorexia, bulimia. If the memory is sin from a distance with no emotional connection with it – heal shame. Then go back to healing of the emotions. Always listen to the Lord.

The child (4-6 year olds) is in pain that is too intense and must relieve that pain. To feel secure they fantasize that their world is what it needs to be for them to feel safe and secure. They create a denial of reality and can make themselves or parents superior to what they really are (idealize). For healing to come this denial (which the Bible calls darkness and blindness) has to be seen for what it is. The rubble must be cleared away, our eyes must be opened to see what was always there but we were unaware of (ie. the reality of Christ's presence).

The core of being human is not the mind but the will – the freedom of choice. The garden of Eden illustrates this. If God had stopped Eve she would have stopped being human. So when God gives parents children – He does not stop them or intervene. We are affected by what is done to us. Doing a family tree helps to see patterns and then breaking them. Putting the cross between this person and the generations before.

A memory can be visual (prophetic people see pictures). It can be auditory – hearing sounds or it can be kinesthetic – feeling in the body. The pain is lifted by the Lord Jesus. The sin (the self-protection survival skills) is repented of. The belief is changed. Forgiveness is given and received, relationships are dealt with. Healing is opening a door to change. No change may have occurred outwardly yet but the door is open so we can grow where before we were stuck. Now new habits need to be built.

Healing Memories and Shame by John Smeltzer (teaching tape)

The Esther/Daniel Program

From Shame to Peace p. 219-222

Test program: for two weeks, twice a day, spend ten minutes under the shower, or in a bubble bath (the issue is to feel one's skin). Use body lotion after the shower, to prevent dry skin and itching. Initially the time can be shorter, but it should soon increase to ten minutes. If the tension becomes too high and after two weeks this showering is still not pleasant, drop the program. There are other things you might want to work on first, such as physical exercises. After two weeks of doing this once or twice a day, I have often received reports from abuse and rape survivors that these two weeks alone have made a terrific impact on their self-awareness. Some of the responses I received taught me how deeply shame is linked to the skin.

Perfume (for men a lotion or aftershave) – choose one that you love. There is one condition: don't look at the price. Just remember the psychiatrist is more expensive! Be aware if you use one you have of the associations with it.

Clothing: Choose one special outfit. There can be a fear about dressing nicely because it brings attention to the body. Make a list of what a normal outfit would cost and multiply it times four. Then start saving for one outfit at that price. This is way beyond the norm, so it takes time to save. Keep it a secret (as a surprise for later). Buy some fashion magazines to study the clothing in the price range you're saving for.

Shopping: Spend no less than six weeks looking and browsing. Take a good friend along who will not impose their opinions on you, someone who will laugh with you and encourage you. Then make your decision.

Party: Once the money for the new outfit is in, there are at least six weeks in which to save a bit more for the Grand Finale, the party. If you are single, invite friends to the party and then to the talk of the evening. If married, a different approach might be fun. Book a weekend in a hotel secretly. Arrange babysitting, pack the bags and whisk your husband away. Then let him wait in the hotel bar while you dress up alone. Then when you come down, you will see the amazement, perhaps even the worried look. Then it's important to say the right first words, "Peace, it's all paid for...."

Self-care creates an atmosphere in which one is not just praying, but where spirit, soul and body become more harmonious elements- a prayer in themselves. It is not a self-care program for others, but more for themselves to enable them to be at home in their own body.

Week Five: Child Within

People were also bringing babies to Jesus to have him touch them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. But Jesus called the children to him and said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Luke 18:15-16

Inner Child

When we are children we have parents who comfort us and take care of us. When we are adults we do that for ourselves. There is still a part of us who is a child. As an adult we take up the role to parent that part of ourselves. The child is the part of us that needs to feel loved, taken care of, valued and protected. We will tend to parent this child the way we were parented. If our parents were demanding and harsh we tend to do the same to ourselves. If our parents abused us, we will reject that part of ourselves as a scapegoat for our suffering. We will see that child as ragged and filthy. Instead of having compassion on the child's neediness, we will condemn and blame it. If we blame ourselves for something that has happened, then we have the ability to fix the situation. If we can blame that child for the abuse, that gives us a sense of control over the event. It is harder to look with compassion at that child and receive it with mercy, blaming the one who caused the pain. It is very scary for a child to blame a parent, then they lose their source of life. So the child will blame itself and as an adult we will agree with that child and blame them.

As Christians we tend to reject this child as the enemy. It is immature and we are striving to be godly. It is self-centered and we are striving to be other-centered and God-centered. The child so blatantly needs and we are trying to be self-sufficient and not need anyone else, because that makes us vulnerable. If we are vulnerable we can be hurt and disappointed. This is how we protect ourselves.

Compassion is the key

Jesus said: Let the little children come unto Me, and forbid them not. If we keep trying to quiet our inner child we will be rebuked just as He rebuked His disciples when they tried to protect Him from the children who came to be blessed. The Lord is not scandalized by our child and it's needs, or the foolish ways we might have sought to satisfy that child. He welcomes that child and loves him/her. Then He commands us to do the same. We are called to love ourselves so we can love others. Our relationship with ourselves is our most intimate. If we are harsh with ourselves we will be harsh with others.

We will never have more compassion on others, than we do on ourselves.

That does not mean you will be allowed to do everything that child wants. We are called to parent the child. We listen to his/her needs and then we as wise parents look to the best way to meet them. We need relationships. We need other people

in our lives to see us as we really are and still love and accept us. That starts with the honesty to see ourselves as we really are. To admit that we are incomplete and need.

We are created to worship. To me that means we were created incomplete, in need of covering. We must have another to worship, someone greater than myself that I can lose myself in and adore. If we are not allowed to bring the broken hurting part of our hearts to God, then we will look to people or addictions to meet that need. If shame keeps us from facing the truth that I am not self-sufficient and I need, than I will find myself reaching to satisfy that longing in less than honorable ways (addictions).

When a child is sexually abused, it sexualises them. The sexual switch is turned on. First it creates an association with sexual feelings and pain/shame (if not at the time, then later when the betrayal is realized). It can also create an association between love and sex if it came from someone who portrayed it as love. Love = (abusive) sex. (Abusive) Sex = love. The child now has to deal with sexual feelings that would not have been awakened until later. They have been forced to grow up. This leaves the carefree child behind in the dust. In focusing on the child within, we are going back to claim that child that was disregarded and honor them. We do that by allowing their feelings to surface.

All our emotional energy had to be channelled to survive. Unconscious play was not as possible. Even trying to get our emotional needs met became dangerous. We had to be guarded, aware, and so just relaxing and goofing off may not have been an option.

Going back to play

As you listen to your heart you may find a desire in you to simply play. As feelings awaken and a grief process starts you may find yourself mourning the loss of a normal childhood. A longing to be taken care of, especially if you were made responsible for your parent's emotional needs, can awaken. Don't dismiss these longings. Honor them as well as you can. That child in you is an important part of you. As she feels loved and safe, you will be able to love yourself and others much better and receive other's love.

Examples

Slumber party with pj's with footies; coloring with crayons and kid's movies
Friend who plays with legos at age 30 because he couldn't when he was younger
Lady who rode the mechanical horse at the grocery store

Childish = self-pity, victim, self-absorbed, giving away our self w/o choice, helpless, w/o patience so grabbing for satisfaction.

Childlike = fun loving, looking for love and joy and finding it, expressive.
Reclaiming what we want back. Simple and trusting with God. Honest about who we are and what we need (with safe people).

The Child Inside by Teo Van der Weele

The Child inside as a powerful metaphor

In pastoral counseling we use metaphors to express deep meanings in a way which people can grasp. The picture language of 'a child inside' is derived from the idea that an emotional wound stops a person from growing or whose growth is retarded. This can be a wound due to an event or due to a long term condition such as emotional neglect. When I discovered a 'little boy' in me, I came to the point of acceptance of reality: it is like that. I choose to love this boy with the love of God. For this people often need a special manifestation of God's love. After I discovered a 'whole orphanage': (many little sides of me who were kept under control by my mature sides), I made a 'family picture'. One of these boys did not want to come. It was then as if the Lord said: that is OK Teo, leave him, he will come one day. This is when I became even more convinced of the grace of God! As I allowed these immature sides to bask in the love of God, I discovered that they became 'older'. These different sides of my one personality started to talk to each other and it became a form of 'self counseling'.

Loving the Child Inside

You can ask yourself: what do I, as a child, want. Then take time to listen. Usually what comes in your mind comes from the child. One can't do everything what this child wants, we have the word of God as our guide. But at least you can accept that this is what one part of you wants, then choose whether or not to do it. If it is acceptable, look what can be done.

One who worked with 'the Child Inside'.

Once I had to change an appointment. It was not yet nine o'clock in the evening, I thought I could still call the client. She picked up the phone. With laughter she told me: 'Teo, I just took care of the little girl, I read her a story. Now I am on my way to surprise my husband, please call back tomorrow... She put the telephone down while she still was giggling. She had sought help due to sexual adjustment problems in her recent marriage. I had helped her to discover the 'little girl inside'.

She had understood the metaphor and used one room in the house as a 'children's room'. She had dolls there and children's books. One teddy bear was her favorite. She held the bear when she would read a story aloud. She had been suffering from sleeplessness and I had told her that 'when one does not give time to a child in the daytime, it will at times just sleep and want to talk at night when you do have time to listen'. Obviously she had made a choice to be physically expressive of her love for her husband. It was a choice to respond maturely!

Addiction vs. Intimacy

Children of Trauma by Jane Middelton-Moz

-intimacy with people is replaced by intimacy with a substance or compulsion

“Compulsive behaviors, such as overeating, gambling, spending, workaholism, relationship addictions, bulimia, shoplifting, hoarding and anorexia, are born from feelings of intense cravings for nurturing, affection and personal power.”

“Under the surface of compulsive behavior exists an anxious discarded child crying out in loneliness, isolation, helplessness, fear and anger.” They represent the “child’s attempt at survival, security, satisfaction, identity and safety....”
p. 125

“These attempts at ‘treating the symptom’ fail to take into account the pain, gnawing emptiness, helplessness, fear and unexpressed anger of the neglected, discarded, internal child. Frequently childhood symptoms such as overeating, shoplifting and perfectionism are indicators of an emotionally neglected, anxious, depressed child.” p. 126

“Compulsive behavior is driven by an anxious deprived angry child.” p. 131

“The real child becomes discarded early. ‘I am’ is replaced with ‘I am unlovable as I am. I must try to be what you need for both of us to survive.’” p. 130

“Compulsive overeaters as children frequently heard the parental message, ‘You are too much for me,’ or ‘You are not wanted.’ Bulimics might hear, ‘Make me proud; correct my life.’ Anorexics might hear, ‘You are part of me. You and I are one. Be perfect; be good so that we both can live.’” p. 132

“If asked about concepts of self, a compulsive overeater might reply, ‘I have no right to be here, to bother anyone. I am too much for people.’ A person suffering from bulimia might say, ‘I’m never good enough. I can’t do anything right.’ A person who is anorexic might say, ‘I am an empty shell. I have no self. I will do what you want but will hate both of us for it.’” p. 132

“Frequently in our attempts to treat compulsive behaviors, we isolate behaviors and ignore the internal child’s pain. The gambling, the overeating, the spending are frequently seen as weakness or a sign of a lack of will, thus pointing another shaming finger at the traumatized child.” p. 134

Abuse-related tension-reducing behaviors

1. The survivor experiences or **anticipates** an interpersonal stressor, usually involving perceived **abandonment**, unfairness, betrayal, or significant conflict with a love or authority figure.
2. This stressor, because of its **similarity to unresolved childhood** abuse issues, **restimulates** or exacerbates powerful feelings of rage, anxiety, helplessness, self-loathing, and/or emptiness.
3. The seemingly **unbearable** psychic pressure, arising from these internal states, in combination with the survivor's abuse-related **dread of painful feelings** and relative lack of affect (mood) regulation skills, **motivates** (a) a tendency toward **dissociation**, including **detachment from anxiety or guilt** about **consequences** of potentially self-injurious acts and (b) **a search for any means of tension reduction**.
4. The survivor responds with activities designed to provide one or more of the following:
 - temporary distraction (gets your attention on something else)
 - interruption of dissociative or dysphoric (depressed, anxious, miserable) states
 - anesthesia of psychic pain (kills the mental pain)
 - restoration of control (makes you feel back in control)
 - distress-incompatible sensory input (do stuff that makes it impossible to feel bad)
 - temporary filling of perceived emptiness
 - self-soothing
 - specific relief from guilt of self-hatred

Because these behaviors are responses to affects or memories that have been to some extent dissociated, the survivors may experience her or his responses as impulsively chosen or ego-dystonic- as though they had emerged "from out of nowhere."

5. Due to the effectiveness of these distress-reducing **behaviors, a sense of calm and palpable relief ensues**, at least for some period of time. Also present, however, may be subsequent **guilt or self-disgust** at having engaged in such activities, as well as a growing sense of not being in control of one's actions – feelings that may motivate the need for further avoidance behavior in the near future.

6. Ultimately, the use of tension-reducing mechanisms in the future is reinforced, based on what is essentially an avoidance learning paradigm: Behavior that reduces pain is likely to be repeated in the presence or threat of further pain.

Child Abuse Trauma: Theory and Treatment of the Lasting Effects
by John N. Briere

A Door of Hope by Jan Frank

Permission to Feel

“This area of experiencing the feelings is very important in the healing process. It includes experiencing feelings both past and present and is vitally significant for the victim who has shut off her emotion. She has learned to do this as a means to survive. The shut-off primarily occurs as a result of dealing with intense pain. The child adopts this technique as a way to cope emotionally. Unfortunately, this pattern is often carried into adulthood and can severely affect a woman’s relationships. These women are often in denial. Many times it is necessary to teach them how to identify their emotions in the present before they can connect with their feelings of the past and with their inner child.” P. 66

You may need to admit you’re angry. If you’re always angry you may need to admit that you are scared and feel deeply vulnerable and helpless.

“As victims, we must scrutinize the loss resulting from the injury. But our focus must not remain there. We are to assess the damage in order to plan wisely for the future restoration. We must look carefully at the losses and feelings we experienced in childhood traumas in order to gather the material needed to begin a rebuilding program.” P. 67

Letting the Child off the Hook

“Let me make a very bold, but factual statement. A child victim is 100 percent free of any responsibility. The aggressor is always fully responsible. We have been duped often by society into thinking that the “seductive child” is merely getting what she asks for. This is false. I do not believe there is any such child walking around, but even if there were, the adult still holds complete responsibility for his behaviour. My experience has taught me that a child who is behaving in a sexually precocious manner usually has been molested already. A victim of child molestation suffers from having her sexual arousal system activated prematurely. This causes confusion, misunderstanding and a sexual identity imbalance in the child. She is forced to deal with emotions and physiological responses that God did not intend for her to experience until the pubertal years. It is no wonder victims suffer difficulty in later years.

Many victims attempt to find every loophole in order to absolve their aggressor from responsibility. There is a point in which compassion and understanding become a part of the total resolution for the victim, but, in these early stages, the victim must not rationalize away the accountability of the offender.

The next reason a victim has difficulty establishing responsibility is her fear of losing valued relationships. Some victims have no desire to have a relationship with the one who has offended them. Others, however, feel pressured to maintain a relationship due to loyalty issues within the family. This often prevents the victim from establishing proper accountability.

Unfortunately victims are in a double bind. They feel guilty for not telling parents, teachers or someone in authority; yet they cannot tell because it could disrupt the family unit and they would feel guilty about that. Often these feelings are carried over into adult life and play significant roles in the recovery process. P. 71-72

Co-contributors

Often grief will come up towards those who stood by and let it happen. Their non-action was also a betrayal. We needed protection and were not given it.

Stepping out of Denial with others

The family may not want to deal with reality as you are working through your feelings. You have a choice whether to share their denial or to step out of it risking the loss of relationship.

Minimizing your experience

“There is one other significant issue – the victim’s attempt to minimize the act or intent of the aggressor. By minimizing, or denying, the victim removes the significance of the event to free herself and the perpetrator.” P. 79

“...the goal of establishing responsibility is not to push blame in all directions in order to give the victim a ‘blank slate.’ The primary function is to place responsibility where it belongs. Once the victim establishes the responsibility of the aggressor and any co-contributors in past traumatic incidents, she can go on to realistically assume responsibility for today, for her own life, without centering today’s blames and responsibilities in and on the past. Many times the victims are so overburdened by assuming the false guilt and responsibility of others that they are unable to take on the responsibility that is rightfully their own. Balance of responsibility is a vital component in the future wholeness of the victim and the restoration of the family. P. 81-82

Joshua 7:1 the Israelites were defeated because of one man’s sin. The Lord showed who it was and it was dealt with so they could be victorious once again!

Week Six: The Power of Blessing

Blessing Defined

The act of declaring, or wishing, God's favor and goodness upon others. The blessing is not only the good effect of words; it also has the power to bring them to pass. In the Bible, important persons blessed those with less power or influence. The patriarchs pronounced benefits upon their children, often near their own deaths (Gen 49:1-28). Even if spoken by mistake, once a blessing was given it could not be taken back (Gen 27).

Leaders often blessed people, especially when getting ready to leave them. These included Moses (Deut 33), Joshua (22:6-7), and Jesus (Luke 24:50). Equals could bless each other by being friendly (Gen 12:3). One can also bless God, showing gratitude to Him (Deut 8:10) in songs of praise (Ps 103:1-2). (Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary)

To make happy

The Lord said to Moses: 'Tell Aaron and his sons: This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them: The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace.' So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them (Numb.6:22-27).

'Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ' (Rom. 1:7, the beginning of each of Paul's letters).

Grace and peace in the New Testament blessing

We noted before the richness of the meaning of the word 'grace'. How it refers to a loving God, who smiles at us, in spite of what went wrong in our relationship. Peace also has a deep meaning. It is more than just the absence of war or stress. The Greek word Paul used has the meaning of the Hebrew word Shalom: well-being in every sense, in spirit, soul and body. In the New Testament this Shalom is described in two ways, as a gift from God and as a fruit of the Spirit. There is a Shalom gift that we can receive also (John 14:27). By 'remaining in Jesus' the Shalom vital juices flow towards us, like an infusion of life.

Shalom and the Kingdom of God

Jesus' message was a message of the Kingdom of God. The Jews were looking forward to that. It was hard to live under the Roman yoke. The coming of Jesus brought hope. But Jesus went further than just the longing for peace on earth. He started talking about another Kingdom that could be recognized by the SHALOM. This had already been predicted by Isaiah (Isa.11:1-10). First this Kingdom was given as a personal inner happening. The revelation of the real empire would still be a long time coming (Acts 1:6-7). I believe this Shalom-working to be the central theme of what Jesus did in His pastoral care.

Microwave Prayer

I have often wondered how Jesus got results so quickly. Problems then were not in the least less serious than today. There is not a single reason to believe that there were no traumatized people around in Jesus' days. Yet nothing has been written about lengthy therapies. I once prayed 'Lord, did you have some sort of pastoral microwave oven?' The longer this question was in my mind, the more I understood that there is indeed a similarity! Normal cooking is done by adding heat. In a microwave oven the heat gets into the food, through vibrations that generate heat inside the food. This seems to me a nice metaphor of what happened to people who were touched by Jesus. Power came from within Him. The power of God made something resonate INSIDE the people.

The power of the 'God of peace' works in spirit, soul and body (1 Thes.5:23). When I realized its connection with 1 Cor. 6:18, in which it becomes clear that sexual sins have a physical effect, an idea entered my mind! I am not talking about possible illness, but about the sin-infection, which the body registers and remembers. Apparently a physical touch by the power of God is necessary to 'purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit' (2 Cor. 7:1).

I have often seen how someone with deep emotional wounds received healing, without words, through a 'Maranatha experience'. The God of peace comes and then inner peace can come (Ps.131, Hebr.4). Not until we have this peace can we face reality. From peace we then progress to painful memories that have not been cleared yet. When the pain gets too intense, we are able to go back (with practice) to peace to receive strength.

I sometimes experience that old pain is so strong that God's smile is not seen. I then first try to help the counselee, through encouraging words and specific questions, to get away from this concentration on grief toward the goodness and grace of God. This does not mean that pain could not be good. On the contrary, tears release the poison of the misery that happened to us. They have a healing effect. 'With tears we wash the wounds of the soul'. There should really be a moment to bless remorse. It is necessary to know what laughing is to be able to be healed in crying (first grace, then the pain!).

Of course, some people are so full of grief that they should first get rid of it before they are able to even listen to something encouraging. To enable the attention on grief to shift to the grace of God, I have developed a method of asking questions. I call it 'Pearl Diving'. (see earlier lesson)

Periods of worship: the blessing of God

God created us for us to live in harmony together with Him. He wants voluntary sacrifices of praise. He chose to create people who would serve Him voluntarily. He was and is searching for relationships. But to bless Him...? Yet, the expression 'the blessing of God' in the Bible is often used (Ps.17:6, 26:12, 34:1, 63:4, 66:8, 68:26, 96:2, 100:4, 103:1, 104:1-35, 115:18, 134:1-2, 135:19, 145:1-2, vs.10, vs. 21., Dan.2:19-20, 4:34).

The peace that we received, the infusion of life that makes our sickened tree of life healthy again, can flow back to Him through blessing God. Our relationship is not one-way traffic! To be honest, it goes beyond my understanding. But it does not keep me from doing what He asks me to do.

The blessing of grief and anger

Grief can be very healthy, something we could bless. Mourning is an important aspect of the human existence. We are constantly losing. Again and again we lose relationships. This is also a form of 'dying'. Dealing with grief well is a condition for getting on with your life. The period of mourning is necessary to make the good-bye permanent, so you can make new decisions as to what you are going to do next, without the former bonds (Rom.7:1-5).

Also anger belongs to the creation gift of God. God can be angry and He has created us with the ability to be angry. But, again we can see that the Fall is making it difficult for us. God already warned Cain: anger is an opportunity for darkness to fill your heart (Gen.4:6-7). Many Christians are afraid of anger. I often tell incest victims who start remembering what has happened: it is good you are angry, it is about time! There is a way to learn how to be angry without doing sin (Eph.4:26): be angry about the sin and then pray the Maranatha prayer! Come Lord Jesus Come! God, who comes in our anger, can cleanse sin and so the right kind of anger will remain. We can ask Jesus to put a wall of protection around our anger so we will not hurt others in our anger. (Teo Van der Weele)

Breaking the Cycle of Family Curses: Free at Last by Larry Huch

Iniquity - Ex. 20:5

God forbids bowing down and worshipping an idol, which is anything we love and reverence more than Him. What He is saying is that when we worship an idol, we are allowing something other than Him to rule us, to make us bow down and serve it. When we do that, the spirit that operates through that idol will come into our lives and not only make us bow down to it again and again, but it will pass from us to our children and our children's children, making them bow down to it. So this spirit of iniquity becomes a force on the inside that causes us and generations after us to bow or bend to its destructive nature.

A spirit of iniquity could be in your life because of something you did, or it could also be something that has landed on you because of something a member of your family did years before you were born. It could be an iniquity, or family curse, that has passed from one generation to another because of something that has happened in your family or something that has happened to your family.

Iniquity can come in many forms: drug abuse, poverty, eating disorders, suicide, children being born out of wedlock, etc. There is no limit. p.30

How does the devil get a door into our lives to begin a family or generational curse? There has to be a gateway through which a curse enters. P. 35

***The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.
John 10:10a***

I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. John 10:10b

He will give you beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness (Isaiah 61:3)

When we look at the Old Testament meaning of iniquity, we see that in the context of the verses of Scripture where it is used, iniquity is a spiritual force that pressure us and drives us to bow or bend under its destructive nature. From this New Testament verse, we can see that to be delivered of iniquity, we must speak the truth, name the iniquity for what it is, confess the fault, and declare that the blood of Jesus Christ has set us free. P. 44

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned. Romans 5:12

Shut the Door

The moment we receive Jesus, every force of darkness that's coming against our life flees. But it comes back looking for an open door. Even though our lives have been swept and garnished, blood-washed and cleansed, if it finds that we don't understand spiritual curses and we've left a door open, it comes back in and is worse than it was before. Matt. 12:43-45

Repent of judgments and inner vows Heb. 12:15 (bitter root) *I'll never*
Heal the wound that opened the door through forgiveness, it breaks their influence over you.

Forgive those who have hurt you, as you are able Matt. 6:12

Pray and break the curses

Walk in love; receiving God's for yourself and then giving it to others.

Walk in forgiveness and obedience to maintain the freedom

Father God,

I come before you in the name and in the power of Your Son, Jesus. I admit that I'm a sinner and I ask You to forgive me of all my sins. Jesus, come into my heart and make me a new person. Change me from the inside out and mold me into who You want me to be. Father, as You gave Your Son's life for me, I give my life to You.

Right now, I break every family curse and every generation curse (name them specifically if you can) on my life. I plead the blood of Jesus Christ over my mind, my spirit, and my body. I break every yoke and every bondage from my past, and I sever those ties through the power of the blood of Jesus back ten generations.

I declare my freedom right now. I claim my liberty right now. I claim all that has been lost to be restored to me right now. Fill me, Lord, with Your love, Your peace, Your joy, and Your victory. Thank You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The word "redeemed" means that we are ransomed or brought back to the original place. That original place and the original blessing is everything we had in the Garden of Eden. Adam said, "Father, not Your will, but mine be done," and at that moment, Adam sacrificed man's willpower in every area. The willpower we lost in the Garden of Eden was won back in the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus said, "Not My will, but Thy will be done." Matt. 26:39

Through Jesus we have the power to choose how we will live. We are no longer captive to our wounds or other people's sins. Now we can choose life and healing.

Ex. 3:11-15 "I AM" "I AM" in these verses is translated from Yahweh, and can be translated: ***I will be everything you need Me to be whenever you need Me to be it.***

Jesus answered, I have told you that **I am** he; John 18:4-8 KJV (guards fell back)

I will restore you

*Therefore I am now going to allure you;
I will lead you to the desert and I will speak tenderly to you.
There I will give you back that which was stolen from you
and I will make your worst circumstances into a door of hope.
They will lead you to Me.
You will sing in joy just like you did when you first found Me
and I delivered you.*

*Our relationship will change
instead of seeing Me as your Master
you will see Me as your good, loving Husband.
I will remove the false guilt and shame from your heart.
You will no longer feel them.*

*I will abolish the defeat from your life.
Now you will fight and win.
You will be able to lie down and feel safe again.
You will want to be Mine and I will be yours forever.
It will be different from your past relationships though.
You will find out what it is like to be loved
in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion.
You will see what faithfulness is like
you will know Me says the Lord.*

*And how I will respond to the yes in your heart.
I will call out to My Spirit and
He will rain down on you and soak you in My Presence.
We will plant you in My love and My Words.*

*You will prosper and grow
and you will no longer feel rejected by Me.
You will become convinced of My love and acceptance.
You may not feel worthy
but all your unworthiness will be swallowed up
in My devotion for you
There is a place in My heart just for you!*

Watch Me, I will heal your heart if..... you will let Me.

Hosea 2 :14-23 (my paraphrase)

Walking in Shalom Peace

Worship

Relax, unclench, receive His peace by focusing on Him
Who is He? Does He love me? What did He show me on the cross?
My need = His supply, He is I AM

Receive

His love, His healing, His words of love and affirmation
Soak in His Word, use your imagination, build a safe hiding place
His peace, His Presence is the oil that sets us free; Romans 16:20
1 John 3:11 He came to set the captives free

Listen

To His voice, your heart, your needs, the voice of the child inside you, your body
Slowly the ball of pain tightly wound will start to unravel and you will feel

Recognize and Renew your Mind

The culture you grew up in
God's culture – what healthy looks like
His perspective of the past, His place in it
Life is lived by grace and not do's
Let Him fill your heart and satisfy your soul with His touch, His love, His healing

Seal it

With thanksgiving
You don't need to fix yourself
There's no timetable with the Lord

STEPPING OUT OF CHAOS

Recovery For Incest Survivors, Adult Children Of Alcoholics
And Co-dependents by Marsha Utain, M.S.

Recovery is often a long and painful process for Adult children of Dysfunctional Families, but sometimes it can be made easier when you understand the systems and patterns that run your life.

If you were raised in a dysfunctional family, you have, for the most part, been raised to be inauthentic, to lie to yourself and others about what you are feeling and what motivates you. You have been raised to play psychological games with yourself and others. Although true insights about those games come from doing deep levels of process work, it often helps to have a framework of understanding from which to view your daily situations and some steps to follow to help you out of the dilemmas.

DRAMA TRIANGLE

Developed in the late 1960s by Stephen Karpman, the drama Triangle is a description of one of the most persuasive and damaging psychological games play today.

In 1978, after recognizing the value of the Drama Triangle, I began working with Dr. Arthur Melville to clarify the Triangle so that it could be used as a major tool in the understanding of dysfunctional families. We added some information to the basic Triangle to develop a more complete model of human dysfunction. We also found that while the original Triangle could be used to describe the complicated interactions of psychological games, it did not pay enough attention to the emotional processes that keep people caught in the Triangle. So Dr. Melville developed a tool called the Feeling (Emotional) Diamond, based on the four basic emotions of Joy, Fear, Sadness and Anger, and we began to use that with the new information we had added to the Triangle to support people in moving out of drama and chaos in their lives.

The Drama Triangle now can be used to describe the various processes characteristic of all dysfunctional families, including addictive families. By understanding the roles designated in the Triangle, the way they interact and the rules that ensnare you, you can learn to avoid becoming entangled in the Triangle and the drama that the Triangle precipitates.

If you come from a family suffering from alcoholism, incest, emotional or physical violence or chronic co-dependence, you are probably aware of the chaos and drama that was part of growing up in a dysfunctional home. Having been raised in a dysfunctional family, you realize that you were expected to act out a particular role in the family for the family's benefit. You were expected to be inauthentic. You were not allowed to be in touch with who you are, how you were feeling and what truly motivated you. If you were raised in a dysfunctional family, you are already familiar with the Drama Triangle, although you never had a name for what you were experiencing. All

you would know is that you felt awful and nothing seemed to turn out the way you had hoped or expected. What you were experiencing was being caught in the Triangle and having to play out the various roles and moves governed by the nature of the Triangle.

The Drama Triangle is the representation of a complex interaction process involving the three participating roles of victim, persecutor and rescuer. The triangle is based on blame and guilt and is put into operation whenever any type of lie or denial occurs. Without blame, guilt or lies there would be no Drama Triangle and no chaos. Instead there would be healthy responsible relationships based on honest communications.

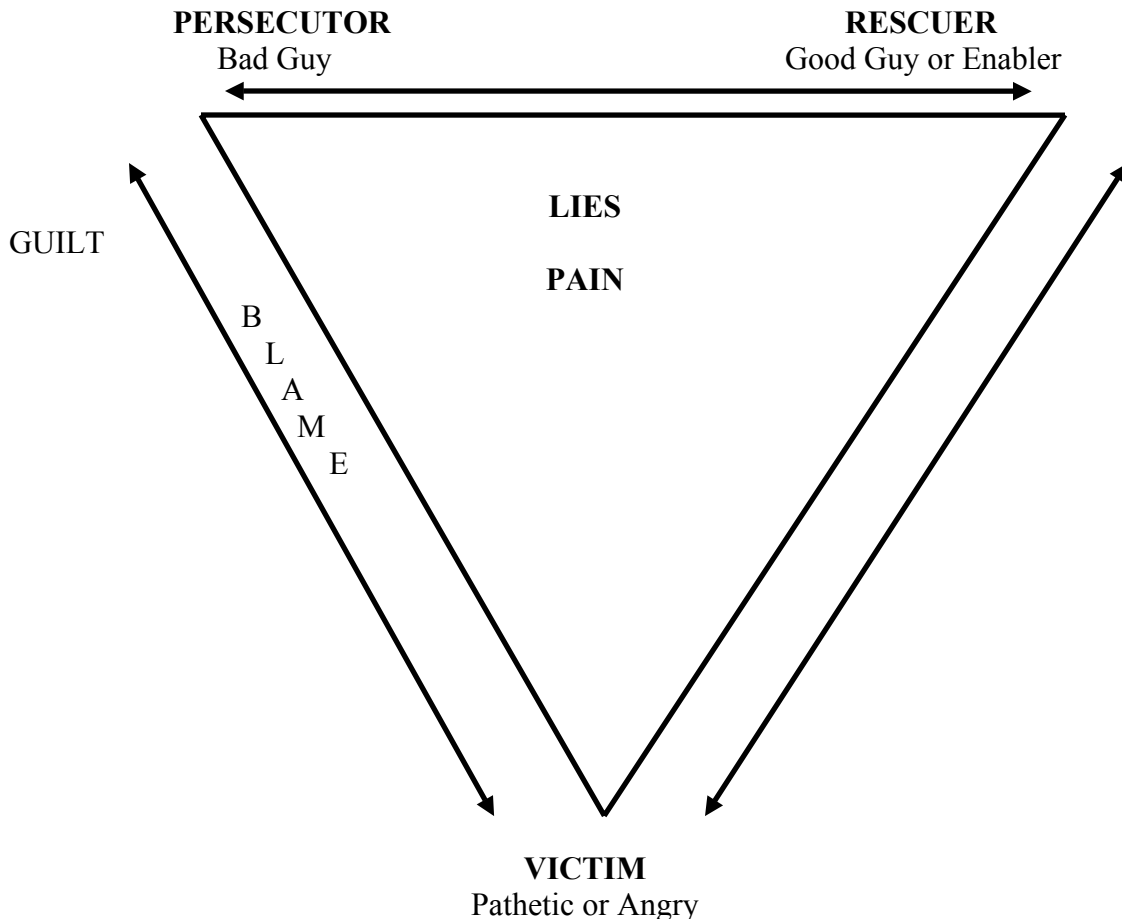


Figure 1. Drama Triangle

(Melville's and Utain's variation on the Karpman Triangle)

If you look at the Triangle in figure 1, you will notice that it is placed upside down on one of the points, rather than on its side. This configuration emphasizes the pivotal position of the victim. To understand the Triangle, it would, therefore, be best to start with that position. Before exploring the Triangle in depth, it is important to remember that *participating in any role in the Triangle does not mean that you are a bad person*. It means that you are caught in the dysfunctional programming that you grew up within your family.

Victim

The victim position is the key role in the Triangle because it is the position around which the others revolve. People operating in the victim position take no responsibility for their actions or feelings. They truly believe that they are life's fall guys. Their perception is that everyone in the world is "doing it to them." They continually look for someone or something else to blame for things not working in their lives. Victims can frequently be identified by their usage of such language as : Everyone/anyone does it to me; you/they (the government, my mother, father, boss, spouse, children, etc.) do it to me; poor me!

Pathetic Victim And Angry Victim

There are two basic types of victims, the pathetic victim and the angry victim. The pathetic victim plays the pity-ploy using woeful "poor me" looks and the desolate language of self-pity, while the angry victim pretends to be powerful, using phrases, such as, "I won't let you do it to me," "Look what you did to me," "You're not going to do that to me again," or "you're bad."

Both types of victim are looking for someone to blame for the emotions they are having and for their lives not working. In addition, they look for a rescuer, someone they can "hook" into taking care of them and their responsibilities.

Victims manipulate others into doing what they want with blame and guilt. They will find someone that they can blame for their unfulfilled lives. The victim sees this person as a persecutor. If that person believes the victim and accepts the blame, then he will feel guilty and try to remedy the situation. As soon as he tries to fix things for the victim, he moves from persecutor to rescuer.

Manipulation

Let's take an example of two friends and watch how the victim operates and tries to manipulate the friend into rescuing him.

Neil and Martin have known each other since grade school. Martin holds down a responsible position as an assistant manager for a large food chain, achieving his position by working his way up since graduation from high school, six years earlier, when he began work as a box boy.

Neil has never held down a job for more than three months. He is rarely on time anywhere, especially work, but always has some excuse. Neil is a victim. He claims that the world picks on him and no one understands him.

One day Neil shows up at Martin's, wanting to borrow Martin's car. Neil's car is in the shop. He didn't check his oil, and he destroyed his engine. Neil says that he has a job interview and that he tried to borrow his mother's car, but she refused to let him use it. Neil has taken no responsibility for not taking care of his own car. Neil, the victim, enters Martin's house, blaming his mother for stopping him from going to his job interview and calling her names because she would not lend him her car. Neil's mother is cast in the persecutor role, and Neil is trying to manipulate Martin into the rescuer role by implying that Martin will be to blame if Neil cannot get to his job interview.

The last time Neil had car trouble, Martin loaned Neil his car even before Neil asked for it. Neil was supposed to borrow it for a few hours, but he kept it for several days, and Martin had to take the bus to work until he could get his car back. When he finally got it back, it had two dents in the door that Neil claims were there before and refused to repair. Martin was upset, but never learned how to communicate his feelings or take care of himself in this type of situation. His parents had taught him that it was not nice to get angry with people.

When Neil came back to borrow the car again, he tried to make Martin feel guilty and believe it would be Martin's fault if Neil could not get to the interview. If Martin were to feel guilty, he would be "hooked" again into the Triangle because he doesn't know how to deal with guilt in a healthy way. He would lend Neil the car and become the rescuer.

If Martin did not lend Neil the car this time, Neil would then make Martin into the persecutor. Even if Martin attempts to help Neil by making suggestions to Neil about getting to the interview by bus, Neil would still find a way to blame Martin. Neil would claim that Martin was trying to make Neil look bad by having him show up by bus.

Martin was raised in the Triangle without ever knowing it. He was trained by his parents' and his church's standards to believe that in order for him to be good, he had to take care of other people - physically, emotionally, or spiritually - even at the cost of his own well-being. Martin was drilled with the idea that to take care of himself was selfish and that selfishness was bad. Therefore when Neil, the victim, approached him the first time with his tales of woe, Martin was a prime target for the manipulative hook of guilt. Martin already believed that he *should* take care of other people's problems, and that if he did not, he was bad. Because he did not wish to be cast in the bad guy, persecutor role, he quickly jumped in to rescue Neil, the victim. He ended up doing something that was not in his best interest.

Martin did not realize that he was raised to be a rescuer. His parents did not realize that they were teaching him not to be selfish for their own selfish reasons, so that they would look good to those around them whom they wished to please. They did not realize they were setting Martin up so that no matter what he does with Neil, he will feel awful because they raised Martin in the Triangle, and he does not know how to get out of it. All that he knows how to do is move positions in The triangle, but moving positions in the Triangle only produces more pain.

Rescuer

In the Triangle, the position of the rescuer is the position of the good guy. Because of the way that most people are raised, whenever they feel guilty and believe that they have been "bad" and done something wrong, they will usually try to get out of the guilt by moving into the rescuer good guy position. Martin is an example of someone who feels guilty and moves into the rescuer position. Martin prefers the position of rescuer to the position of persecutor, because the rescuer position affords him some relief from the guilt, giving him an opportunity to pretend that he is acting unselfishly for someone else's good. Martin gets a momentary high from helping. As any recovering co-dependent knows, this high is what makes the rescuer position so addictive.

Martin believes that by helping others, he is being unselfish. He does not realize that he is actually motivated by very selfish reasons. He does not want to feel bad, nor appear to be a bad person. Martin believes that he should share, no matter what the circumstances. He does not realize that he was taught by his parents to share his toys, even when he didn't want to share them, because his parents believed that if Martin did not share his toys, he would make them look bad as parents.

One of the things that Dr. Melville and I realized in doing this work with the Drama Triangle is that most people will choose a favorite position to start from in the Triangle, usually the victim or the rescuer.

For the person who prefers being a rescuer, there is another important point to understand about rescuers. Because of the very nature of the Triangle, *rescuers must have a victim*, someone to take care of, someone to control, someone, who by their very need makes the rescuer feel good. When people are co-dependent and therefore addicted to the high of the rescuer role, they will find that they actually have a need to rescue. In order to fill that need, they will have to have a victim around whom they can "help." If there isn't one available, the rescuer will attempt to make one.

In general, *rescuers need to be needed*, and they need to be in control and be right, no matter what the cost. Being in control and being right allows the rescuer to avoid dealing with any emotions or discomfort that might arise from facing life honestly. Remember that in all addictions, the addictive substance or behavior, in this case rescuing, is used by the addict to avoid feelings.

Rescuers are so determined not to feel and not to pay attention to anyone else's feelings, they do not realize that the underlying communication they are transmitting to their chosen victim is, "You are insufficient; you are inept; you cannot take care of yourself. You are not good enough. Therefore, I should be in charge."

This position of rescuer in the Triangle fits the traditional role in the alcoholic family syndrome of the enabler, the co-alcoholic. This is the person in the family who enables the alcoholic to continue the disease process by taking care of the alcoholic's responsibilities and not leaving the alcoholic to be responsible for his own actions.

When I work with people who choose the rescuer-enabler position as their first choice in the Drama Triangle and who tell me how much they like to help people, I usually do a little exercise to allow them to experience how degrading it is to be placed in a position of being inept and not good enough. Rescuers are usually so involved with the high of feeling good because they have helped someone, they fail to notice how awful the person being rescued is made to feel in the process. Often I will ask the rescuer to imagine being the other person while I play the role of the rescuer and verbalize key phrases, such as, "Here, let me do it for you!" or "Isn't it better to do it the right way?" I will especially look for phrases that the rescuer uses when rescuing others or phrases that their own parents may have used when rescuing them.

One for One rule

Still another important aspect of the Triangle that is pertinent to the rescuer role is the *one for one rule* that says that *every time someone rescues another person, the rescuer will end up the final victim in that particular play.*

Let's look at Martin and Neil to see if this is how it happens. Neil borrowed Martin's car for a few hours, kept the car for a few days without Martin's permission. Martin had to take the bus to work, which made his daily commute two hours longer and left him exhausted. On top of that, Neil returned the car with two dents in it. Martin has known Neil since childhood and knew that he was irresponsible, so Martin knew that lending the car was not acting in his own best interest. He was taking care of Neil in order to try to feel good about himself and to avoid feeling guilty. By looking for the emotional high of helping Neil, instead of the healthy action of taking care of himself, he ended up the victim, having to pay for two dents in his car and jeopardize his own well-being by adding stress to his job situation.

Frequently the person starting the maneuvers in the Triangle as a rescuer is a rescuer-martyr, who will end up as the victim-martyr. This is the person who helps others with strings attached. This person has a hidden agenda, an expectation that is never openly communicated nor agreed upon and is rarely, if ever, achieved.

The rescuer-martyr believes that if he does something nice for people, they should feel obligated to do something nice for him. This sense of obligation gives the rescuer-martyr a false sense of control over people. Without necessarily saying it out loud, the rescuer-martyr is thinking, "Look at all that I've done for you. You owe me."

Persecutor

The role of the persecutor is the role of the bad guy, the villain. It is the one role that few people consciously choose as their starting place in the Triangle. In fact, it is the role that keeps the Triangle going because people in the Triangle are attempting to avoid that position by moving into the rescuer role or by perceiving themselves as victims. No one likes to see himself as the bad guy. Even criminals in prison want to be seen as the victims of society, rather than society's persecutors. The persecutor role is the one that victims use, along with blame, to maneuver others into rescuing them. What makes this position truly unique is the fact that once a person is in the Triangle and he decides to leave it, he must leave from this position. In other words, when a person removes himself from Playing the Triangle, anyone still playing will perceive him as the persecutor.

Positioning, Maneuvering And Rules In The Triangle

Now that you have a basic understanding of the positions in the Triangle there are a number of key points to consider remembering:

- 1. *The Triangle is based on lies.*** Tell a lie to yourself or someone else, whether it is a lie about data or a lie about your emotions or your experience, and you move immediately into the Triangle and the addictive process.
- 2. *All shoulds are a lie.*** Therefore shoulds will throw you into the triangle. (An important piece of your healing process is learning how to go about getting your needs and wants met after you learn to distinguish them from your shoulds or the things that other people have told you are your needs.)
- 3. *All positions in the Triangle cause pain*** so no matter what position you are in at any given moment in the Triangle, you will be in pain.
- 4. *There is no power in the Triangle.*** When you are in the Triangle, you are operating from powerlessness and irresponsibility no matter what position you are playing.
- 5. *Everyone has a favorite starting position*** which is usually either the rescuer or the victim. Few people choose persecutor as starting position.
- 6. *Once you are hooked into the Triangle, you will end up playing all the positions, whether you like it or not,*** because of the nature of the Triangle. You may have perceived yourself as a rescuer who wound up as someone's victim while at the same time that person perceives you as the persecutor.
- 7. *Guilt is the experience that books you into the Triangle*** and therefore you need to learn a few points about guilt:
 - a. Guilt is a signal that someone is attempting to pull you into the Triangle.
 - b. To stay out of the Triangle you need to learn to give yourself permission to feel guilty without acting on that guilt. In other words, do not let the guilt push you into the rescuer position.
 - c. Learn to sit with the guilt and be uncomfortable. This experience called guilt is a learned response; it is not the same thing as being out of integrity with yourself.
- 8. *The "escape hatch" out of the Triangle is located at the persecutor position.*** Telling the truth and feeling your emotions opens the escape hatch out of the Triangle. In other words, in order to leave the Triangle or stay out of the Triangle, you have to be willing for others (the victims or the other rescuers) to perceive you as the bad guy. This does not mean that you *are* the bad guy; it does mean that others choose to see you that way. If you are not willing to be seen as a persecutor, you will get hooked into rescuing and place yourself back or keep yourself in the Triangle. If you are already in the Triangle and wish to leave, you have to be willing for those in the Triangle with you to see you as the persecutor.

When you are in the process of leaving the Triangle, you are in the process of telling yourself the truth about your feelings, your motives and the situation in general. You are willing to experience whatever feelings you are having and you are willing to let others experience their feelings without your having to rescue them. If the other people in the Triangle are willing to tell the truth and experience their feelings, the Triangle disappears. If they are not, as is more often the case, then you leave looking like their persecutor.

Let's go back to Martin as an example. In order for Martin to leave the triangle that he is in with Neil, Martin must be willing to feel his fear of looking like the bad guy and his sadness that his friend wants to blame him. This does *not* mean that he actually is the persecutor even though Neil perceives him that way. To stay out of the Triangle, Martin must also be willing to Let Neil leave the friendship.

9. *You can play the Triangle alone, with yourself.* (Once you have been raised in a dysfunctional family, you do not need anyone else to push you into the Triangle.)

a. The way you play the Triangle by yourself is by listening to the negative voice inside your head that beats you up, puts you down, and constantly *shoulds* you.

b. Remember, *shoulds are a lie*. They have nothing to do with who you are or how the universe works. They are someone else's interpretation of what to do and what is good.

c. When you play the Triangle with yourself, your should-er will persecute you so that you will feel like a victim. At the same time you will be feeling guilty. This will trigger the belief that you are the persecutor. The guilt will drive you to rescue someone (or some situation) even when no one except you is attempting to manipulate you into the rescuer position.

10. *When you actively participate in a relationship with someone who lives in the Triangle, you must be very careful of the hooks.* It is difficult to be around people who constantly operate in the Triangle and not get hooked into the Triangle yourself, especially if your personal boundaries are not clear, and you have not learned to recognize the Triangle.

11. *Your internalized Should-er is also the voice that pushes you into the Triangle when others around you are in the Triangle and attempting to hook you.* The *should-er* is your false-self, the part inside you that is actually someone else but that you believe is you. It is controlling, negative, rigid, perfectionistic and righteous. Without that part of you operating, you would not participate in the Triangle.

12. *Being in the Triangle is not being alive;* it is a living death. It is a life of pain, inauthenticity and lack of love and acceptance.

13. *Suicide is the ultimate victim act, the ultimate act of self-pity.* When the victim perceives that he cannot get anyone to come to the rescue anymore and he does not have the courage to seek new alternatives, he may turn to suicide.

14. *Telling the truth and experiencing your emotions is the only way out of the Triangle.* To do that you have to learn to know and define your boundaries and take responsibility for recognizing, experiencing, expressing and completing your emotions.

Let's look at another example of the Triangle positions and how they relate to co-dependence and the Alcoholic family syndrome.

I once worked with a young woman who entered therapy as an acknowledged Adult child of an Alcoholic. When I asked her what her purpose was for being in therapy, she said that she had come in to work on herself and her co-dependence,. After relating that healthy-sounding purpose, she then proceeded to spend a large part of the session telling me about her husband. He was not living up to her expectations. He would stay at home, depressed, and not go out job-hunting. In her estimation her unhappiness was based on his behavior, and he needed fixing. She said that she kept

trying to push him to get a job. When I probed further, I found out he had abandoned the career he had liked because she was embarrassed by it.

When I pointed out to her the co-dependence involved in what she was telling me, she was able to recognize her need to control matters in order not to feel uncomfortable, but she did not want to change. Although she had come into the session stating that she wanted to work on *her* co-dependence, what she was really hoping to do was to get me to help her find a way to change her husband.

When we explore this scenario relative to the positions in the Triangle (which the three of us did later on), we find that her husband in an effort to rescue her, to take care of her embarrassment and to avoid guilt, left his job in a career that he enjoyed. He ended up experiencing himself as the victim-martyr and her as the persecutor. She, on the other hand, saw herself as the victim of her husband's unacceptable career and had hoped to get me to rescue her.

When she came into my office, she did not realize that she was trying to bring me into the Triangle. She was not even aware that she lived in the Triangle. She didn't see that she was trying to fix him in order to avoid dealing with herself. Toward the end of the first session, I told her that in order for me to work with her, she would have to be willing to let go of trying to control his life, starting with letting go of controlling his career. She told me she couldn't do that. I told her that this would be her last session. I would not work with her as long as her primary goal was to fix him. She sat there stunned. She had really thought that I would help her by showing her how to fix him. I watched the fear rise in her eyes as she realized that I was not going to do what she wanted, which was to rescue her.

She sat for several minutes more. Then she took an important step in her recovery. She agreed to be *willing* to let go of trying to fix him. She went home and told him that she was willing to stop running his career and that he could go get any job that he wanted. He did. This was the first time that they had been able to consciously step out of the Triangle.

It was obvious to me when this woman came in that she had only a superficial understanding of co-dependence. With the help of the Drama Triangle and the Feeling (Emotion) Diamond and much deep process work, this woman was quickly able to recognize when her co-dependence was operating.

The Feeling (Emotion) Diamond

As human beings we are all born with the ability to experience all emotions and the potential to distinguish the various emotions from each other. Through our dysfunctional upbringings, we suppress those abilities and are forced to go back and relearn how to identify, experience and express our emotions. In order to make that process easier, I begin by teaching about the four basic emotions, joy, fear, sadness, and anger.

First, let us look at an experience circle. (see figure 2.) Now let us assume that this circle represents a portion of life. Emotions are among the many types of experiences that we have in life. Emotions are an important part of the experience of self

and provide the energy for living. The four basic emotions are joy, fear, sadness and anger.

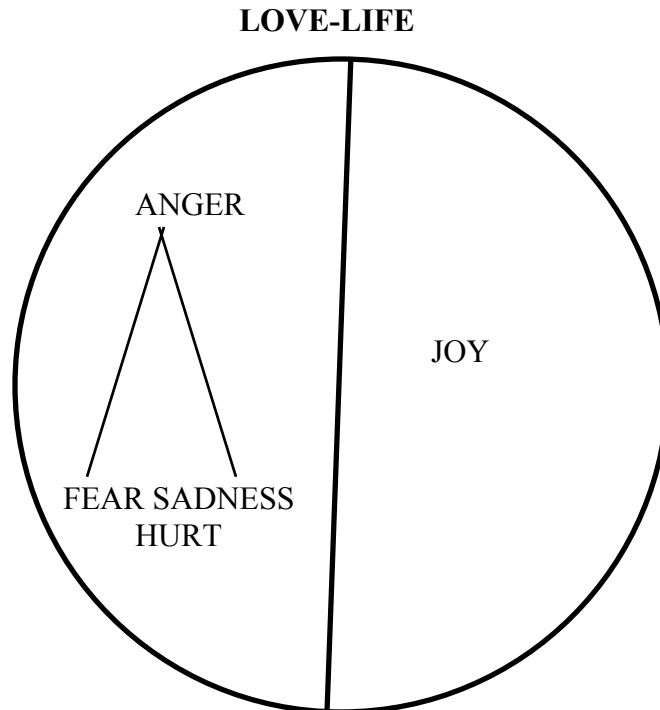


Figure 2. Experience Circle

Looking at the circle, you will notice that joy is placed alone on the right side of the circle. This is done because many people seem to believe that joy is the only good emotion and fear, sadness and anger are bad emotions. This is not so. *All emotions are good.* Fear, sadness and anger are good.

The reason that most people believe that fear, sadness and anger are bad is because they are unable to distinguish the emotions from the actions associated with them. While emotions can provide the energy for actions, they are *not* the actions.

For example, most people have a tendency to confuse the emotion called anger with the action of violence. Dysfunctional families do not teach the difference between emotions and actions because in many dysfunctional homes violence often follows anger or takes the place of it. This leads people raised in that dysfunction to believe that violence and anger are the same thing and that anger is, therefore, scary and bad and must be avoided. Avoiding anger causes people to amass huge amounts of it, and when they can hold no more, they burst out in violence or react with passive aggression. If people can learn to experience their anger when it happens, they do not need to use violence.

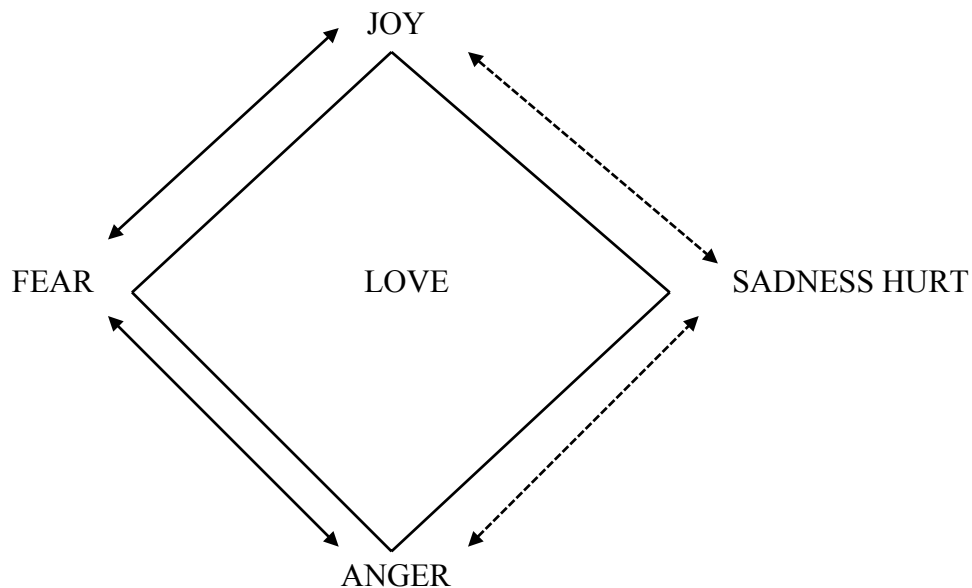
Primary and Secondary Emotions

If you look at the left side of the circle, you will notice an interesting configuration. Fear and sadness/hurt are on the same line while anger is above them and connected to both of them. Fear and sadness/hurt are soft receptive emotions. Anger is a

hard emotion; it is powerful and dynamic. It is our protective defensive emotion. Often it is the only way we know to defend our boundaries. Although anger does not trigger first, once it is triggered, it must be experienced and completed (not acted out) in order to return to and complete the fear and/or the sadness/hurt from which the anger was activated.

If you have been taught, as men in particular have been taught, that fear and sadness are bad, anger is probably the only emotion that you will experience. If you have also been taught that anger is bad, you will suppress that as well and begin to behave with passive aggression. Unable to directly express anger, you will seek indirect covert ways of expressing it. Because most women have been taught that anger is bad, women shut down on anger and either turn it against themselves or become victims of everyone else's anger.

To further simplify understanding the emotional process, Dr. Melville developed the Feeling (Emotion) diamond (see figure 3). He took the circle that we were using and created a diagram to demonstrate the way the emotional process operates.



When you look at the diamond, you will see that at the top of the diamond is joy, which is where all of us wish to be.

There is nothing wrong with wishing to experience joy. The problem comes when you believe you should be there all the time, and try to hold on to joy and avoid feeling fear, sadness and anger. Trying to hold on to joy (or anything else) removes you from reality and the ability to live in the moment. You have to be able to *experience* your joy and *complete it* in order to stay present in the moment. If you allow yourself to truly live in the moment, you will discover that you will have the opportunity to experience not only the other emotions, but all the richness that life has to offer. As you progress through your healing process, living in the moment becomes easier.

Complete And Release

Looking again at the diamond, you will notice that when you leave joy you will go to either fear or sadness/hurt or both. If you complete and release those emotions, you can return to the place at the top to await joy. If you do not complete and release the fear or sadness/hurt, you will either store them or convert them to anger. When you store fear or sadness/hurt, you will find it difficult to return to joy, and the more fear and sadness you store, the more difficult it will become to experience any joy. If you are like most people who believe that being happy is right and being sad or angry is wrong, you walk around with huge phony smiles on your face, pretending to yourself and everyone else that you are happy.

If your emotional process also includes converting the fear and/or sadness to anger, then you will also walk around with large amounts of incomplete anger. Looking at the diamond, you will see that there is no direct pathway between anger and joy. In order to return to a place of joy, you must therefore not only complete and release the experience of anger, but you must also go back and experience the actual fear and/or sadness from which the anger was triggered. Only then you can you return to a possibility of joy.

Also remember that when the level of anger stored reaches the point at which you can no longer contain it, the anger will burst out, either as rage or violence or at the very least, passive aggression. You are like a storage vat. There is just so much volume available for the storage of emotions. That is why storing and controlling emotions may work for a while but it eventually stops working. When there is no more room available, the pot boils over and the lid blows off.

Another important point to remember is that if you are not experiencing some form of joy (such as happiness or contentment), you are going to be experiencing some form of fear, sadness/hurt or anger in various combinations. There are very few people on the planet today who are so advanced in the process and so present in the moment that they experience no emotions. Most people who claim to feel nothing because they are either having an emotional response but are in denial about it, or they are so disassociated from their emotions that they are numb. Because western culture tends to prize intellect and degrade emotions, people often use this as an excuse to intellectualize all human experience and behave and communicate (as Virginia Satir has said) like living computers, very reasonable with no show of emotions.

If you are an Adult Child, you have had such poor emotional models and have lived with so much dysfunction that you have shut down your ability to experience your emotions. That does not mean that the emotions are not happening; it does mean you are out of touch with them. As a result, you are probably having several *other* types of experiences, ranging from anxiety attacks to addictive urges, all of which result from the inability to experience the true emotions that are there.

If you are in recovery, whether it is a 12-Step program or therapy, you are probably beginning to discover emotions and experiences that you never thought possible. If that is not the case, you need to do something else to move your process along.

Learning *about* the emotions and learning to experience them are not the same thing. You may have learned that you have emotions and you may even be able to

recognize them when you sense they are there but that does not mean you know how to experience them or complete them. Learning to recognize emotions is like coming upon the ocean and learning what it is. You see the ocean and then you sit down and watch it. In order to experience it completely, you have to go in and swim in it.

Using The Emotion Diamond To Stay Out Of the Triangle

If you wish to stay out of the Triangle, you must learn to tell the truth about what emotions you are feeling, and you must learn to take responsibility for them. Remember that no one else is responsible for your emotions. No one else can fix them for you or change them for you. People may support you in experiencing them, but ultimately no one but you can complete them and release them.

Frequently your dysfunctional family is so repressive that you cannot identify certain emotions or distinguish them from other types of experiences. If you want to heal yourself, you must learn to complete your emotional experiences to stay out of the Drama triangle. When you tell the truth about what you are feeling, no longer take on the guilt that others try to place on you and you are willing to feel the fear and sadness of being accused of being the persecutor by those who stay in the Triangle, you will step out of the chaos in your life. By being responsible for acknowledging and experiencing your emotions, you are also being responsible for your addictive process. Using the Diamond will give you some support in accomplishing that task.

1. Whenever you discover that things in your life are not working, you can assume that your addictive process has been activated and that you are caught in the Triangle.
2. Ask yourself which position you are in at the moment. Is this your primary choice in the Triangle?
3. How did you get there? What lie did you tell yourself or someone else?
4. Which emotion(s) are you avoiding? Use the Feeling (Emotion) Diamond here. If you are not experiencing some form of joy, you are experiencing some form of fear, sadness/hurt or anger. Are you having anger? If so, you must experience it and complete it; not act it out! Then look for the primary emotion from which the anger triggered. Is it fear or sadness/hurt or both? Again, experience that and complete it.

Remember that emotions must be experienced, not intellectualized. You cannot think your way into an experience. No matter how much I describe to you the color red in scientific terms of wave length and intensity, you will still not have the actual sensory experience of the color red if you have been blind since birth. Intellectual understanding of something is not the same as experiencing it.

If you answer the question, “What emotion are you avoiding?” by identifying a response such as disappointment, you have discovered a complex experience that combines the emotion of sadness associated with an unmet expectation. Keep looking for the four basic emotions. Remember it takes time after all the years of suppression to find and feel your emotions. Find someone who can help you experience your emotions.

Some people seem to be able to identify the emotions but cannot seem to complete them. There are several possible reasons for that:

1. You may have mislabeled an emotion so that you cannot really experience or complete it.
2. You may be having more than one emotion and experience activated at once. You will need to identify all of them.
3. You may need to process the tapes and the scenes that have surfaced with your exploration.
4. You may be “running” your emotions on yourself or the others in the Triangle. If this is the case, you will probably find yourself in the victim position and you will have great difficulty removing yourself from that role or the triangle in general.

Running The Emotions

Here is what *running* your emotions is about: Let us look at the Experience Line (see Figure 4) as if it were the range between the inability to experience emotions (on the left) which I call, in jargon, “stuffing it” and the ability to experience and express emotions in a healthy way (on the right) which I label EXP.

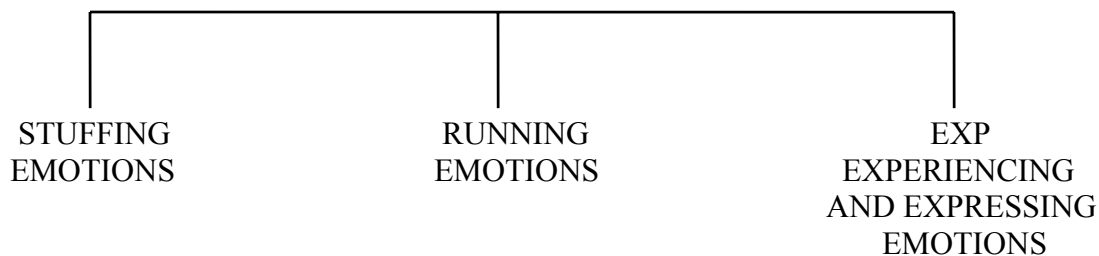


Figure 4. Experience Line

When you are stuffing emotions, you are denying, ignoring or disassociating from your emotions. You may be going numb. The emotions are occurring but you are not in touch with them. You may have been raised in a family where only one emotion was acceptable. It might have been sadness or anger or fear. If this is so, you will translate all your emotions into the one the family has made acceptable so you will still be out of touch with what you are really feeling. You will not be able to complete your emotions until you discover what the real emotions are so that you can complete them.

At some point in your recovery process, you will begin to have a sense of the emotions and how they feel. This is the point at which you may begin running them. What happens is that you make some contact with the emotion, but you still do not know how to take responsibility for experiencing and completing it. Instead, you may use the emotion to try to manipulate someone into the Triangle to rescue you from your emotion. You will blame others for your emotion and expect them to do something to take it away. You are attempting to control with your emotions. You are running them or making them right so that you do not have to feel them.

You will probably sound like this: “I’m hurt (or angry or scared) and it’s your fault,” or “I’m feeling . . . (fill in the blank) . . . and you should do something about the situation.” Or “What you did made me feel . . . (fill in emotion) . . .and now you have to stop/change or I can’t get through my feelings.”

While it is perfectly acceptable to request that someone change certain behaviors, it is still not the other person’s responsibility to fix your emotions. You must learn to complete your emotions whether the other person changes or not. Otherwise you will become addicted to controlling other people’s behavior in order not to have to experience your own emotions.

Let us look at another form of running emotions. If you were raised in a family where only one emotion was acceptable, anger, for example, everyone will walk around with that emotion. As soon as you begin to feel any other emotion, you will convert it to anger, not because you have something to be angry about, but because that is the way your family acts. If you are sad, you will act angry; if you are scared, you will act angry. You may not even experience the anger; it has simply become an act for you and you will learn to use the anger act to control yourself and others. This is one of the ways you develop a false self.

When you are further along in your healing process, you will be able to recognize your various emotions. Then you will begin to express them to others in order to get further in touch with the emotions and to complete them, *not* to try to make someone else responsible for them.

Remember this is a process and you may slide back and forth along the Experience Line until you are very much in touch with your emotions and the way that you deal with them.

When you are operating anywhere to the left of the experiencing and expressing end of the Experience Line, you will find yourself operating in the Drama Triangle. As you learn to experience and express your emotions in order to have them and complete them and not to run them on other people or try to get some results from people, you will find yourself less and less in the Drama Triangle and less and less in your addictive process.