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Welcome to Reclaiming Your Inner Child Workshop



Artist Unknown

Goals of the Reclaiming Your Inner Child Workshop

To be able to have an increased definition of who your inner child is.

To identify and become aware of the signs that suggest our inner child needs some reparenting.

To be able to identify strategies for reparenting and reclaiming your inner child.

This workshop is not a replacement for treatment by a professional, but an opportunity to review skills already learned or to identify new skills that could potentially be helpful in reclaiming your inner child.

Introduction & Definitions

What is our inner child?

- A subpersonality, specifically, “Your inner child is the part of your personality that still reacts and feels like a child.”
- We all have one living within us, even if we’re not aware of him or her.
- The part of you that is innocent and is all about feelings and primal needs.

What does our inner child do?

- It harbors any trauma, neglect, joys, disciplines, and disappointments you may have experienced as a child.
- It influences the way we think, behave and relate to others as adults.
- From forensic psychologist Stephen A. Deeds, who studies anger, madness, and destructive behavior: "True adulthood hinges on acknowledging, accepting, and taking responsibility for loving and parenting one's own inner child. For most adults, this never happens. Instead, their inner child has been denied, neglected, disparaged, abandoned or rejected. We are told by society to "grow up," putting childish things aside. To become adults, we've been taught that our inner child--representing our child-like capacity for innocence, wonder, awe, joy, sensitivity and playfulness--must be stifled, quarantined or even killed. The inner child comprises and potentiates these positive qualities. But it also holds our accumulated childhood hurts, traumas, fears and angers. "Grown-ups" are convinced they have successfully outgrown, jettisoned, and left this child--and its emotional baggage--long behind. But this is far from the truth."

What are the different types of inner children?

- Abandoned Child
 - Often times has a history of feeling lonely, emotionally abandoned or literally orphaned.
 - Has a tendency to push others away and isolating.
 - Is emotionally frozen in time.
- Wounded Child
 - Holds the memories of abuse or past trauma.
 - Focus can be helping others wounded through their trauma.
 - May remain stuck in abusive patterns with others.
- Nature Child
 - Is in love with natural things such as animals, plants and more.
 - Can place nature and/or animals over work, relationships and even humans.

- **Magical Child**
 - Is a deep thinker who believe in ground-breaking ideas.
 - Is creative and free.
 - Can be in their imagination so much that they live outside of reality – in their imagination.
 - Many times are reclusive or resistant to others ideas.
- **Divine Child**
 - Encompasses the childlike innocence of friendliness, pure heart and love.
 - Is most connected spiritually.
 - Can be intolerant of others and their supposed ungodly ways of life.
- **Eternal Child**
 - Life is all rosy, typically having had adequate or excessive parental care during childhood.
 - Is always seeking to have fun.
 - Can be excessively dependent on others.
 - Can become unreliable and can't be trusted with serious tasks.

You may relate to one or all of these inner children types. No matter which one, you can heal and reparent your inner child.

How do we heal our inner child?

One therapeutic approach is to re-parent our inner child.

10 Signs our inner child needs some reparenting:

- difficulty with boundaries
- poor self-esteem
- identity issues
- extremely competitive
- obsessive tendencies
- difficulty handling emotions
- struggling with addiction
- avoid people
- rebellious
- anxious around new experiences

What is reparenting your inner child?

Reparenting your inner child is a therapeutic approach you may take to begin healing. There are different ways in which the inner child reaches out and shows that they need reparenting. You may struggle with your self-esteem and criticize yourself often. You may avoid social interactions or may seek constant attention and affirmation from others. You may feel shame and guilt over your strong emotions. Before you can begin to reparent your inner child, it is essential that you recognize these behaviors and see that they are happening for a reason. You must recognize that your inner child resides within you and needs your support.

Reparenting your inner child means confronting any pain or fear from your past and means validating all of the emotions you've ever felt. We reparent our inner children to show ourselves the support and the love that we needed in the past and deserve now. We remind ourselves how valuable we are and always have been.

How do we re-parent?

Internal Strategies:

- Become conscious of inner child and communicate with them
 - Your inner child needs to be able to trust you, and you can establish this trust by being a “supportive, non-shaming ally to validate their abandonment, neglect, abuse and enmeshment.”
 - It's important to communicate with yourself as you would a child.
 - Keep in constant touch with your inner child on a daily basis through care and nurture.
- Confront past traumas
 - It is important to accept that the way that your parents treated you caused you pain. You can feel anger, hurt, sadness. You can grieve for your inner child, what might've been, the unfulfilled developmental needs. You can remind yourself that your pain is about what happened to you, that nothing was your fault. You can feel shame and loneliness, you can even embrace it. After this, you can come out from hiding and find your truest self.
- Take care of needs that were neglected
 - Tell yourself what you wanted to hear as a child.
 - Remind yourself how beautiful you are.

- Pay attention to the little things that pertain to only you – birthdays, achievements, favorite spots and activities, etc.
 - Give your inner child assurance of love, attention and care.
 - Offer opportunities to sing and play.

- Set boundaries and discipline
 - If you need to suspend contact with those that have caused you pain, you can. “True freedom from unhealthy roles and relationships starts within each of us, not in our interactions and confrontations with others.” You can also set limits and choose how much you give. “It isn’t selfish to set limits on people who keep on taking. Your job is to take care of yourself, regardless of what others think you should do.”
 - This allows you to develop discernment, recognizing unhealthy, fuzzy or nonexistent boundaries.
 - Adult self needs to be clear with internal boundaries and what is healthy in all areas of life.
 - Boundary statements are not about being unfeeling or uncaring, but being fully connected to your full self.
 - These are both internal and external.

- 6 steps:
 - trust
 - validation
 - shock & anger
 - sadness
 - remorse
 - loneliness

- List of freedoms
 - freedom to be human and imperfect
 - Freedom to have your genuine thoughts and feelings
 - Freedom to suspend contact (true freedom from unhealthy roles and relationships starts within each of us, not in our interactions and confrontations with others, pg 165)
 - Freedom to set limits and choose how much to give (your goodness as a person isn’t based on how much you give in relationships, and it isn’t

selfish to set limits on people who keep on taking. Your job is to take care of yourself, regardless of what others think you should do, pg 167)

- Freedom to have self-compassion
- Freedom from excessive empathy
- Freedom to take action on your own behalf
- Freedom to express yourself, approach old relationships in new ways, and to not want anything from your parent

External Strategies:

- Formulate a dialogue
 - Talk to the inner child as if it were another person. This helps to validate its existence. It can help to say things like “I see you, I hear you.” You can formulate a relationship with your inner child through meditation:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-dTtHriNlk>
- Look at or recreate pictures
 - Assuming that this will be a safe experience for you. This is a way to re-frame the experiences you had as a child.
 - If pictures are not safe, you can recreate these experiences through art, instead
- Allow child spaces to play
 - As we get older, we make less time for play. But as a kid, this is important for development.
 - Now, it can be a way to heal ourselves. We can give ourselves permission to invest in play
 - What might that look like for you? A certain space? A certain toy?
- Say affirmations out loud to your inner child
- Write your inner child a letter
- Pay attention to your feelings
- Be mindful of your inner critic
- Exchange questions & answers with your inner child

- Ask your inner child how he or she is feeling and what is wanted. Imagine putting your arm on his or her shoulder and providing a comforting hug.
- Create a safe and light space in your mind where you and your inner child can meet to talk and play.
- Share with your inner child how much he or she is loved.
- Remind yourself how special and wonderful you were as a child, even when you didn't or don't feel like it.

Some questions to ask your inner child:

To do this, use your dominant hand to write out the questions. Use your non-dominant hand to allow your inner child to respond.

What is your name?

How do you feel today?

Do you want to play?

How old are you?

What do you need?

What do you like about...?

What don't you like about...?

What do you like most about you?

When do you feel most alone?

What is your most favorite thing to do?

What would help you feel better when you feel sad?

What is your favorite color?

What's your favorite season?

How do you (inner child) see me (adult self)?

What is your biggest fear?

What do you need to feel loved?

What do you need to feel safe?

What do you want me to know about you?

Things to be aware of

Possible responses from our inner child may be happy, angry or even reserved. Be patient. Children may act out until they know they are safe and cared about.

Be aware of your responses. It's okay if you are having a hard time hearing your inner child. Let them know in writing that you are having a hard time because you are feeling... but you aren't upset with them.

As adults, we want to be listened to, loved and respected. Our inner child wants this too.

Activities for Child Play

Swinging on a swing set

Playing with Play Doh, Slime

Reading childhood books

Watching Disney movies (ie. Beauty and the Beast, Snow White and the Seven Dwarves)

Day dream of a fairytale you made up/Imagination

Art (coloring, drawing, painting, finger painting)

Splashing in the pool or ocean
Play hide and seek with children or your dog
Board games you wanted to play as a child
Dolls or stuffed animals – hugging or care taking
Walking in nature
Collecting things (stuffed animals, trinkets, etc.)

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