

Newsletter

How to Heal Your Emotional Pain

Plus

Upcoming Workshop

Everyone suffers from feelings of emotional pain: of rejection, betrayal, disappointment, or abandonment, along with accompanying feelings of anger, fear and grief. Our life journey is a journey into healing these negative experiences and wounds that are part of the human condition. How do we do this?

The first important step in discovering healing comes from recognizing that what we usually try to do to feel better inevitably fails. Most of us look outside ourselves for healing. If we feel fear of abandonment, or if we feel chronically lonely, we hope that someone will come around to allay these feelings; if we feel disappointed, we ask others or life to change so as to release our disappointment; if we feel fear, we hope life will treat us better; or if we feel angry about what has happened we criticize the world or ourselves for feeling that way. And of course, we can always self-mediate, with food, drugs or endless activity, to avoid our feelings altogether.

The problem is that none of these techniques work. You can never guarantee that anyone or anything out there will treat you in a way that heals your pain. The real answer lies in learning how to love, honor and enjoy yourself and who you are no matter how others or life treats you. Beginning with infancy, we give away our power to others, making their actions toward us the arbiter of how we feel day by day. To heal is to take back that power.

Taking back your power is a tall order, because we are all addicted to our pain, to letting life circumstances determine how we feel, rather deciding we are going to determine how we feel and shape circumstances accordingly. Taking back your power is about committing yourself to some fundamental practices every day, every moment of the day. Here are a few of those practices.

1. In your relationships with others, practice deep personal honesty. Tell others clearly what you feel, think and need. Please realize that this doesn't mean that you have a right to expect others to respond to or to respect your feelings, thoughts and needs, or to understand you. Most people have so many wounds that it takes a long time for anyone to truly hear anyone else. But while speaking your truth may not be a sufficient condition for getting respect, understanding or love from others, it is a necessary condition for that to happen. No one can be there for you, if you don't speak up. Speak up.
2. When life or other people don't respond to your feelings, thoughts and needs, notice if you go into a funk, feel depressed, angry, etc. This is all natural, and it's important to process your pain. But it's also important to realize that when you make how other people respond to you a critical factor in how you feel over time, you have enslaved yourself and abandoned responsibility for your own well-being. Feeling chronically depressed, disappointed, lonely, etc., are all signs that you are asking someone to save you from yourself, and that can never happen. Be gutsy. When hurt, upset, deceived or betrayed, say to yourself that you won't let others control how you feel inside. Own your pride and dignity in yourself, and be willing to do so fiercely.
3. Recognize that the search for someone or something outside you to validate you is really a projection of your own separation from yourself. You don't need to get love outside. You need to begin actively to love the wounded person inside you. When you feel angry, sad or afraid, talk to that person inside you who is so alone and fragile. Make your life job healing the pain of that person inside you by developing a loving relationship to that person. Psychologically, this process is called healing your inner child. Spiritually, it's called finding God and finding faith.

4. Realize that you have only one job in life: to manifest the universal energy that is your life source. Ask yourself each day how you can explore life's possibilities more. Challenge yourself to experience life's abundance instead of bemoaning its lack. Expose yourself to opportunities, to adventures and to explorations. You won't be here on earth for long. Why waste your time being unhappy, depressed, fearful or angry. Isn't life too short for that?

5. Finally, and since the process of change is a deep and long one requiring constant practice, come join me at Esalen in Big Sur, at my workshop on Self-Actualization, from January 10 to January 15. We'll do lots of hands on work on self-healing, and strengthen our resolve through community. What's more, you'll get to enjoy one of the most beautiful places in the United States, a retreat center on the Pacific surrounded by dolphins and sea lions, and sporting hot springs, yoga and dance classes, and fantastic food. What more could you want? Now that is a real adventure! Go to www.esalen.org to find out more, and to register.

Hope to see you soon. Happy end of the year to you!