

J a n u a r y 2 0 1 8



The Evolving Self ...when growth is the only option.

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Trauma and Resilience By Jaqui Duvall, MA

Have you ever wondered if there is a connection between childhood experiences and current behavioral and health challenges in adulthood? Well, interestingly, two doctors at Kaiser and the CDC did a study in the mid-ninety's to determine the answer to that very question. The results are very validating.

The study looked at 10 types of childhood trauma and the effect that having experienced them has on long-term health. They include: physical, emotional and sexual abuse; physical and emotional neglect; living with a family member who's addicted to alcohol or other substances, or who's depressed or has other mental illnesses; experiencing parental divorce or separation; having a family member who's incarcerated, and witnessing a mother being abused (see survey in article below.)

These childhood traumas have been dubbed ACE's (Adverse Childhood Experiences) and subsequent surveys have revealed that 38% of children have experienced at least one ACE. That's 34 million children. The study shows that many of those children will grow up to harm others, harm themselves, or both. In addition, the study reveals that the higher a person's ACE score, the higher their risk of chronic disease, mental illness, violence, being a victim of violence and several other consequences.

Honestly, this news was not earth shattering for me. I've believed there is a direct connection between childhood experiences and adulthood for as long as I can remember. However, the good news is that there is now evidence to back this up. Also, where there is identification of pathology, so to speak, there is someone looking for answers. In this case, the answer is to work on resiliency.

What is resilience? It turns out that there have also been studies done on resilience, also referred to as *stress hardiness*. The bottom line is this: While you may not be able to go back and change the past, nor can you prevent stress from showing up in your life now, you can learn tools to better deal with it.

When we talk about resilience, we're basically talking about self-care. Eating right, exercising regularly, getting a good night's rest, having some kind of regular practice of mindfulness or meditation, working on healthy thinking and healthy attitudes and finally, having a regular practice of participating in pleasant activities.

While this list of focus areas may be clear in and of themselves, as always it is hard to make lasting changes on our own. Think of past New Year's resolutions that are abandoned within the first week of the New Year.

While it is unsettling, to put it mildly, to be confronted with events in childhood you may have worked really hard to forget, it is also empowering to discover just how common it is and that there is something you can do about it.

If you would like to explore your own experience, here is the ACE test.

Prior to your 18th birthday:

1. Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often... Swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you? or Act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt? If Yes, enter 1 ___
2. Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often... Push, grab, slap, or throw something at you? or Ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured? If Yes, enter 1 ___
3. Did an adult or person at least 5 years older than you ever... Touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way? or Attempt or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you? If Yes, enter 1 ___
4. Did you often or very often feel that ... No one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special? or Your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other? If Yes, enter 1 ___
5. Did you often or very often feel that you didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you? or Your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it? If Yes, enter 1 ___
6. Were your parents ever separated or divorced? If Yes, enter 1 ___
7. Was your mother or stepmother: Often or very often pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at her? or Sometimes, often, or very often kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard? or Ever repeatedly hit over at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife? If Yes, enter 1 ___
8. Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic, or who used street drugs? If Yes, enter 1 ___
9. Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide? If Yes, enter 1 ___
10. Did a household member go to prison? If Yes, enter 1 ___

Now add up your "Yes" answers: This is your ACE Score

Affirmation: I release the past and define myself as I choose.

Quote: *"Two things define you: your patience when you have nothing and your attitude when you have everything."* Unknown

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The Longest Journey By Jaqui Duvall, MA

Have you ever experienced an event or a moment in your life that was heartwarming and inspiring? I imagine you have, as for many people this happens when we encounter something or someone we love. It can happen when we witness someone helping another person in need, in the act of rescuing animals and small children. For most people witnessing heartwarming and inspiring events causes us to move out of our heads and into our heart space. The distance between the head and heart in our bodies is only about 10 inches, but some people call this the *Longest Journey* you will ever take.

I have just been reviewing the functions of the different hemispheres of the brain and it turns out that when we're talking about moving out of our heads and into our hearts, we're really talking about moving from our left hemisphere to our right.

The left hemisphere of the brain thinks linearly and methodically. It's all about the past and the future. It is designed to take the enormous collage of the present moment and pick out details which it categorizes and organizes and then associates with all its past information to then project into the future all of our possibilities. It thinks in language and is the home of the inner voice that we hear chattering to us all day long about everything from what we need to buy at the grocery store to a comment on how we looked in the mirror the last time we looked. It sees itself as being a single, solid individual, different, alone and separate from all other people.

The right hemisphere of the brain thinks in pictures and is all about the present moment, right here, right now. Information in the form of energy, streams into the right hemisphere through our senses and explodes in an enormous collage providing a picture of what the present moment looks like, feels like, smells like, tastes like and sounds like. It sees itself as being connected through our senses to everything and everyone.

While the two hemispheres communicate with one another through the Corpus Callosum with 300 million nerve fibers, they are completely separate from one another. Because they process things differently, each hemisphere thinks about and cares about different things.

In addition to all the things I listed above that characterize the brain's right hemisphere, it is also believed to be the place where emotions lie, where the subconscious resides and where we dream. In her book and TED talk of the same title, "My Stroke of Insight," Jill Bolte Taylor says that the right hemisphere of the brain is the place we need to go in the body to experience peace.

When we are in a place of peace, we are connected with all of our inner resources and typically make decisions that are more grounded and intuitively informed.

Adapted from "My Stroke of Insight," Jill Bolte Taylor, Ph.D.

Whole Brain Thinking

Research on the brain has led to an understanding that each of us has a preferred way and mode of thinking that affects the way we take in and process information. The awareness of one's own thinking preferences and the thinking preferences of others, combined with the ability to act outside of one's preferred thinking preferences is known as "Whole Brain® Thinking." (Referenced from: [Whole Brain Thinking](#))

While, in truth, we are always using both sides of our brains, our instinctual human functions in reaction to stressors coming from the outside world often push us into isolation in the Left Brain and for many, it is a critical and negative place to live.

I am typically a Left Brain dominated thinker, which means I have a tendency to analyze. It is how I make sense of chaos and disorder in the world. I came to a point in my life some years ago however, when my analytical tendencies felt overwhelmed by the data coming in. I realized that simply seeking inner peace was way more important to me. I decided to go down the path of learning and integrating a regular meditation practice into my life. This regular practice doesn't eliminate chaos in my life, but certainly gives me a tool to help keep myself calm and detached in the midst of it. In addition, learning to respond to our inner voices in a calming and rational way, can alter how we see the world and how much peace we experience.

Raising awareness about the qualities of the Right Brain can motivate us to make a deliberate choice about where we orient ourselves in our brains, even for just a few minutes. Orienting ourselves to the peacefulness of the Right Brain can support us in seeing ourselves as part of and connected to all of humanity with compassion and empathy for ourselves and others.

Affirmation: In the midst of many options, I choose peace.

Quote: *"Sometimes the best thing you can do is not think, not wonder, not imagine, not obsess. Just breathe, and have faith that everything will work out for the best."* -Bobbie Davis

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You Don't Have to Do Anything You Don't Want to Do By Jaqui Duvall, MA

"You don't have to do anything you don't want to do," a therapist said to me many years ago in response to my ongoing complaint that people in my life were fond of telling me what to do.

It seems to be a common experience that there are some people who really like to be in charge of other people's decisions and actions, even the little things. For example, years ago I was hanging out with such a person when we went to In 'N Out. He ordered a double cheeseburger with onions. When I ordered a single cheeseburger without onions, he made a somewhat loud remark that made it clear to me and everyone within earshot that he really wanted me to have the same thing he was having. To avoid the conflict, at the time, I chose to comply. Today, I choose not to hang out with that person.

Complying with such commands is often done out of a sense of obligation or just plain inability to stand up for oneself. Why? Because it would cause conflict. The #1 reason why people do things they don't want to do is because someone will be upset, angry, disappointed, hurt....(fill in the blank.)

In the family system I grew up in, it was drilled into my head that, "you don't hurt people's feelings." This became a core belief for me and has influenced my decisions my whole life. While it is a good thing to avoid hurting other people's feelings, the problem with this belief is that many times, people are asking/telling you to do things that, 1) They can and should be doing for themselves; 2) Are projecting their stuff onto you; or 3) Are their way of validating their own actions.

A lot of the coping strategies people employ are an unconscious attempt to make themselves feel safe in an unsafe world. And that is exactly what is behind the unconscious intention to control other people. It gives people a sense of certainty in a world where there is none.

When starting classes at Kaiser, I often ask, "How many of you like to be told what to do?" Strangely enough, no one has ever raised their hand. So, clearly it feels safer to tell people what to do than to be told.

Going to the Hardware Store Looking for Milk

There is a very apt saying used in recovery a circle, which says, "Don't go to the hardware store looking for milk." I bring this up because this saying illustrates one of the biggest challenges of my life and that is, how do you deal with people who can't give you what you need... even if they want to.

Over the past couple years I have gone down the path of learning more about attachment trauma which is an experience of not getting your basic emotional needs met when growing up. There are two common ways people cope with this, one is to focus solely on meeting their own needs, to the exclusion of all else. That means that if you are the potential supplier of their need, they will do whatever it takes to influence you to fill their need. The second way is to focus on meeting the needs of others with the hope that they will reciprocate.

The challenge becomes, of course, that people with these two coping strategies tend to attract each other. Therefore, you have a couple where both people are focusing on meeting the needs of one person. The second person continues to try to get their needs met, but the first person is incapable of doing so. Thus the saying, "going to the hardware store looking for milk." They're looking for nurturing, care and support in a store where they don't sell it. Ouch!

The lesson always comes back to listening to your internal communication system to help discern who are trustworthy people who can connect with you in an equally beneficial, reciprocal way.

Affirmation: I boldly and gracefully stand up for myself.

Quote: *"It takes a great deal of bravery to stand up to our enemies, but just as much to stand up to our friends."* J.K Rowling

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Depression Stigma By Jaqui Duvall, MA

Kaiser is currently doing a national campaign to educate and inform people about Depression in the hopes of reducing the stigma people experience around it.

Interestingly, the statistics show that Depression is so prevalent in our country that it is referred to as "the common cold of mental illness." But it is hard to establish accurate numbers because it is underreported mainly because people don't want the stigma of depression. The NIMH (National Institute for Mental Health) estimates that 16 million people in the US suffer from depression. That is 6.9% of the population. Depression is also the leading cause of disability when people go on medical leave from work.

All of those statistics typically help people to feel that they are not alone. But by its very nature; Depression is a condition that inspires isolation and withdrawal from other people. People often compare their insides to everyone else's outsides and they look around seeing happy, active people and they feel like something's wrong with them because they don't fit in.

With so many people experiencing depression, you would think that there would be more acceptance of it and perhaps there is on an interpersonal level. But unfortunately, our insurance system will take a depression diagnosis and really, any diagnosis and use it as an excuse to charge more for coverage or even deny coverage for a "pre-existing" condition.

The truth is, that like anger and anxiety, depression is a part of the instinctual activation system in the human body. The activation system is entirely based on perception; the individual's perception of their level of power in comparison to the dangers/stressors they encounter in life.

Based on the mind/body connection, if the mind perceives that the current challenge is more powerful than the individual, their body will react with the desire to run away. If the challenge appears less powerful, the individual's body will react with anger and the desire to overcome it. If the challenge is perceived as inescapable and there is no clear action to take, the individual's body will react by freezing in powerlessness. It is waiting for clear direction when in reality there may be nothing the individual can do.

What is perceived as more powerful/less powerful or inescapable is also entirely based on the perception of the individual and their beliefs about themselves. This is why people who have been traumatized and/or abused are more prone to depression as typically their sense of individual power was compromised through their experience of abuse.

Contributing Factors for Depression

There are several factors which contribute to depression including:

- Body Chemistry
- Genetics
- Hormones
- Illness and Disease
- Medications
- Misuse of Alcohol and Drugs
- Stressful Life Event(s)

Other than genetics and stressful life events, all the other factors really relate to body chemistry. If you think about all the elements that effect our body chemistry, they might include things like food, alcohol, caffeine, sugar, medications, exercise, and sunlight. The truth is that EVERYTHING affects our body chemistry. Everything we ingest, everything we do, everything we feel and everything we think. The mind/body connection works both ways, so the things you put into your body can effect your chemistry and alter your mood and your thoughts and feelings can also alter your mood which effects your chemistry.

This is powerful information and reflects good news and bad news. The good news is: you have some power/influence over what you put into your body, how much you exercise and how much sunlight you are exposed to. The bad news: you are responsible for what you put in your body, how much exercise you get and how much sunlight you are exposed to. And of course, if severe enough, it is challenging to do anything when deeply depressed. Sometimes, anti-depressant medication is the only thing that gets people moving.

Affirmation: I am powerful beyond measure.

Quote: *"What people never understand is that depression is not about the outside; it's about the inside."* -
Jasmine Warga

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Body Chemistry and the Law of Attraction

By Jaqui Duvall, MA

In my April 2017 newsletter I discussed "[Smile Therapy](#)." I bring it up again because it has been 16 months since I started the smile experiment and I've come to realize some things about how this relates to the "Law of Attraction" that can only happen with personal experience.

When people who teach "The Law of Attraction" talk about *vibration*. In other words: you can't attract something to yourself that doesn't match your vibration, I believe they are referring to body chemistry. Your body chemistry is a complex array of electricity--think neurotransmitters firing--chemical messengers and physiological systems. With each emotion you experience, there is a thought partner and a body chemistry signature that aligns with it.

I spoke last month about [Depression](#) and how body chemistry is a contributing factor. What I didn't say is how much body chemistry is affected by the mind and how it can change in an instant, as fast as you can change your mind. For example, let's say you're walking down the street and you're feeling blue when you run into a friend. You have a brief conversation and when you walk away you feel lighter and happier (of course, the opposite is also possible.) The shift in mood happened in an instant. Another example, when you see something funny and start laughing, it also changes your body chemistry.

How can people change their vibration, aka body chemistry? There are many approaches that help people change including traditional medicine methods like medication, and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) which targets your thinking and perceptions to shift your mind/body state. Other methods include modifying diet, adding exercise and movement and of course, mind/body methods such as meditation, yoga, and Tai chi. Well, my smile therapy is a body/mind approach. Change your body chemistry and it changes your feelings and thinking. And the bonus is, you start attracting based on your modified body chemistry. To be clear, while it's wonderful to smile at other people, lightening and brightening their day, what I'm talking about here is an inner smile, as if your whole body was smiling. And sometimes you have to fake it until you make it. That's what I did!

Affirmation: Today, I choose to smile.

Quote: *"Let my soul smile through my heart and my heart smile through my eyes, that I may scatter rich smiles in sad hearts."* -Paramahansa Yogananda

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Engagement vs. Control By Jaqui Duvall, MA

Are you bugged by certain behaviors you can't seem to control? Are you concerned about the consequences of some of these behaviors, like health issues, debt and relationship challenges. Yes, I've been reading again. The current book is, "The Gift of Our Compulsions," by Mary O'Malley. I am intrigued and excited by what I've read so far and want to share about an approach to interacting with our compulsive behaviors called "Engagement."

First though, let me quote the definition of compulsion from the book which is: "...engaging in any recurring activity to manage our feelings, an activity that eventually ends up managing us." (O'Malley, xi) Some people may not be aware of their compulsions, but I would venture to say that most people are struggling to control some behavior(s.) Whether it's eating, drinking, drugging, TV, shopping, sex, relationships, computer games, Facebook...fill in the blank, everyone has some behavior that is in the range of "compulsive."

In the ten years plus I've been writing this newsletter, I have talked repeatedly about the importance of feeling feelings and what happens when we don't. Unfortunately, as Henry Maudsley said, "Tears unshed will soon make organs weep." But the truth is most people never learned how to experience feelings in the body, process and release them. Because of the fact that many feelings are uncomfortable, like sorrow, anxiety, anger, frustration, powerlessness, many people distract themselves from feeling the full brunt of these emotions through compulsive behaviors.

What happens for most people is that they start to experience consequences related to their compulsive behavior, whether it is a health diagnosis, ill-fitting clothes, overwhelming debt, or even depression. When people feel out of control, they typically try to exert more control by doing things like fad diets, changing the type of alcohol, only watching TV after a certain time, avoiding people who are engaging in the behavior, etc. etc. etc. While there may be some initial success in controlling or managing the compulsive behavior, typically these efforts eventually fail.

Engagement, the skill that Mary O'Malley discusses in her book, involves approaching our inner world, including our body, thoughts and emotions from a non-judgmental, non-attached observer stance with curiosity. This taps into a part of the mind that is aware and capable of observing the ego-based mind that we are aware of as the constant chattering going on inside our heads as well as the emotions in our bodies.

Imagine meeting someone new and feeling curious and excited to learn about them. And when we're able to be completely present without judgment and truly see, hear and understand that person, they experience you as a witness and typically feel validated and a sense of belonging to the human race.

This enables us to be completely present with our inner world and when that happens, our compulsive behaviors tend to calm and soften because we are accepting and loving all the parts of ourselves. Which is, perhaps why we are here!

Affirmation: I choose to engage in the present moment.

Quote: "The point of power is always in the present moment." -Louise Hay

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Positive Fantasy By Jaqui Duvall, MA

When I was 5 years old, the Rogers and Hammerstein version of Cinderella played on my family's RCA color television. More than twenty years later, I remembered the words to many of the songs having only seen it that one time. Clearly, it had a big impact on my 5 year-old mind.

In the beginning of the show, Cinderella sings a song, "...In my own little corner, in my own little chair, I can be whatever I want to be..." She then reviews a variety of fantasy scenarios, "I'm a young Norwegian princess...I'm a thief in Calcutta...I'm a queen in Peru."

The reality of Cinderella's life was not so glamorous or happy. Her father had died leaving her with a "wicked" step-mother and two step-sisters who treated her like a slave. Given her circumstances, her future looked bleak, and yet, in the end, she marries the prince and lives happily ever after.

It is hard for the human mind to absorb truly awful circumstances; so one coping strategy of the brain is to create wonderful, exciting, pleasurable pictures in the mind as a distraction. For some people living in traumatizing circumstances, fantasy is the only way they survive. In that scenario, fantasy could be considered to be a positive use of imagination. Worrying about possible negative outcomes, and "what ifing" is another way people use their imagination but is considered a negative use of imagination.

The million-dollar question is: How did Cinderella achieve a happy ending using fantasy after having lived in such horrible circumstances? Of course, Cinderella is a character in a fairy tale and fairy tales always have happy endings. However, there is some helpful information to be extracted from her experience.

To effectively engage the Law of Attraction, to co-create the outcome you're hoping for, you have to do more than create pictures in your mind. You also need to generate the feeling and energy state those pictures would create if they were your reality.

In my May 2018 newsletter: [Body Chemistry and the Law of Attraction](#) I talked about how shifting your body chemistry supports this and in my April 2017 newsletter I discussed [Smile Therapy](#) as another support for the shift of body chemistry to create a positive vibration. This is essential to support the outcome you desire.

As for the images; it is most powerful to focus on pictures of the completed outcome. In Cinderella's case, once she met the Prince, she was entirely focused on him. When asked what she would say to him, she said, "Your highness, I would like to be your bride." Another less exaggerated example: I used to work in Santa Cruz until 10pm and then have to drive home to San Jose. It always made me nervous to drive Highway 17 in the dark because there are so many animals crossing the road at night. Because of my awareness of the power of images, I shifted my fearful, worry picture to the image of pulling into my driveway safe and sound. You may call it a coincidence, but I fully believe that I created that outcome.

Fantasy Gone Wild

Another interesting example of the use of imagination comes from the book, *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*, by James Thurber. Both of the movies made with this title stray significantly from the original story. But interestingly, "The name **Walter Mitty** and the derivative word "Mittyesque"^[6] have entered the English language, denoting an ineffectual person who spends more time in heroic **daydreams** than paying attention to the real world, or more seriously, one who intentionally attempts to mislead or convince others that he is something that he is not." (Wikipedia)

Interestingly, there is much discussion on the purpose and function of the ego as a mechanism that enables people to push themselves to greater achievement in life. Some people exaggerate their accomplishments, puffing themselves up just like some animals do in the wild to make themselves look bigger than they are. And a person with narcissistic personality disorder may create an entirely false image of themselves.

When interviewing for a job, have you ever led someone to believe that you had experience that you didn't really have to get yourself hired? Have you ever played "One up," in a conversation, stating that you've done that (whatever the first person says) but even better?

While the ego can sometimes participate in *fantasy gone wild*, the ultimate purpose is a good one: to push us to grow and become more than we are.

Affirmation: I create my own reality.

Quote: *"If one is lucky, a solitary fantasy can transform one million realities."* -Maya Angelou

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What I've Learned From Teaching Assertiveness for 30 Years By Jaqui Duvall, MA

While I have come a very long way in my use of Assertiveness over the past thirty years, one of the things I've learned is that being assertive is not a perfect science. There are some situations and people that I still struggle with. Also, my ability to be assertive is tightly linked with my self-esteem. Self-esteem is something that ebbs and flows with constant ups and downs, so there are times when being assertive is a snap. There are other times when I have to consciously and intentionally use all the tools I've learned over the years.

That being said, how I handle certain situations today would have seemed miraculous to me thirty years ago. Here are a few things I've learned:

1. Be ok with not being liked.

One of the most significant reasons people don't stand up for themselves is fear of abandonment. They are afraid their loved ones will leave them. When you are first learning to be assertive, you have to retrain your loved ones. They don't typically like it at first but the truth is: The kind of people I want to have in my life wouldn't leave as a consequence of me setting a boundary, in fact, they would respect me for it.

2. "Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible." -The Dalai Lama

No matter what, be assertive in a kind way. In fact, if you are being mean and unkind, by definition you are being aggressive, not assertive. If you are so angry, upset, outraged, frustrated or whatever, that you can't control how you express yourself, spend time calming and processing yourself so that you can communicate what you need to in a kind way. That means without yelling, swearing, and name-calling. I don't know who said this but it says it all, "Say what you mean, mean what you say, don't say it mean."

3. It's really NEVER about you

When other people do or say things that adversely affect your life and well being, it's really never about you. It's about them. 100% of people, 100% of the time, act out of their own needs. Again, I don't know who said this, but it is true. And knowing this doesn't stop people from taking things personally and making it all about them. The truth is: It's a buttons game. Because we carry our unresolved and unfinished issues around with us like luggage, we are constantly pushing each other's buttons. How do you know if your button has been pushed? Because you have a reaction that it is out of proportion to the situation. To handle this in an assertive way is to own your button; to process a situation to understand what you are experiencing and why and then, when calm, to express yourself, ask for what you need/want if appropriate. Otherwise, to let it go!

4. Beeee Yourself

Brene Brown has made an incredible contribution through her research on shame and vulnerability. She says that one of the most significant human needs is to belong. People do all kinds of things to try to fit in. I would venture to say that all of them result in the exact opposite of the intended goal, they push people away. There is nothing better, more satisfying and life giving, than learning to love and accept yourself the way you are and to therefore, be yourself. That means you are real, you don't pretend to be someone you're not just to get people to like you.

5. Don't let Empathy outweigh your intuition

While empathy is a skill that can be learned, there are some people who will never master it. On the other hand, there are some people who are so empathic that it is *who* they are. They are called "Empaths." When your empathy is a part of who you are, it can be very challenging to interact with others because your empathy causes you to see and feel the other person sometimes even more strongly than you see and feel yourself. Making decisions to support your own highest good become very challenging as a result. It is vitally important to work on mindfulness and sensory skills to be able to tell the difference between another person's needs and your own. Otherwise you will always put other people first.

6. Inner Communication

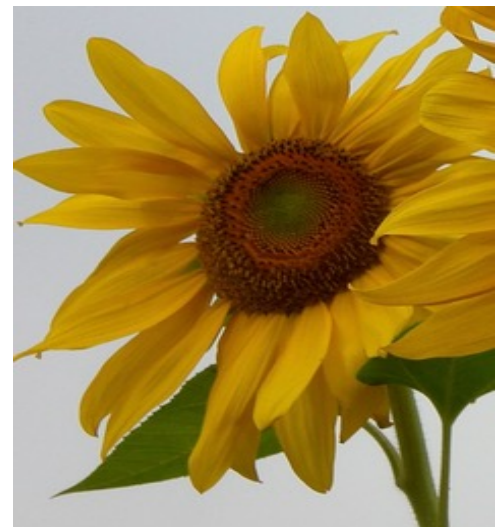
That brings me to our internal communication system. We have senses, impulses and intuition, which are sending signals to us all the time. The information that we receive from these sources is there to help guide us to make decisions and take actions that are for our highest good. We can improve the connection we have with our selves by learning to be more connected with this information. It can even change the way you live.

7. Sometimes silence is the best option.

Affirmation: Everything I need is inside me right now.

Quote: *"If you don't have a seat at the table, you're probably on the menu."* — Elizabeth Warren

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S e p t e m b e r 2 0 1 8



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Perception of Power By Jaqui Duvall, MA

A Veteran patient of mine was talking about anger issues and depression and the very sad story of Veteran suicide. He told me that he had previously made a suicide attempt and still struggled with it. He also said that he made the attempt because he believed it was really the only thing he still had control over in his life.

This relates to a topic I've been contemplating lately and that is: How people's perception of personal power affects their behavior. Our daily lives are largely, if not completely affected by the perception we have of the world and our place in it. This perception is a direct result of our early experiences in life.

When you were growing up, if you had too much stress to deal with in your life, (family challenges, friend challenges, physical challenges, trauma, abuse) then you tend to go through life believing that stress, any stress, is too much. When I say too much, I mean you felt you couldn't cope, didn't have the resources, didn't have support.

If, when you're growing up, you didn't have enough stress-strange as it sounds, there are some people like this-then when you start experiencing stress which inevitably happens for everyone at some point, you also tend to perceive it as being too much because you never dealt with it before and didn't develop inner resources to cope with it.

Finally, if when you were growing up you had just the right amount of stress and had support and guidance to learn to deal with it, you likely developed the perception that you can cope, no matter what it is. So, you go through life believing that things will work out, you'll figure it out, etc., simply because you always have, no matter what the stressor is.

The types of stressors we deal with as adults in these scenarios, typically aren't different, it is simply our perception of our available resources to cope that is different.

You could say that this perception of "available resources to cope" is basically a perception of power. I may not have all the answers and I may not like dealing with this stressor but I know it will work out in the end, or I'll get through it.

These kinds of perceptions are part of our emotional programming, 80% of which is complete by the time we are 8 years old, and is the blueprint from which we live our lives. It is the source of the nice, or not so nice, voice you hear constantly chattering in your head and is the source of the first automatic thought you are aware of when a triggering event happens.

The good news is: We can change our perceptions. Scientists have confirmed that we have Neuroplasticity and therefore, no matter how old we are, we can still learn.

This perception of personal power is a huge factor in how we interact with the world. Our perceptions of our relationship with the world activate our internal systems to respond to the challenges we face. You know, Fight, Flight or Freeze.

Interestingly, the major muscle groups in the body as part of the stress system tend to respond based on our perceived level of power in a given situation. If you perceive that you are more powerful than the challenge you are facing, then you tend to respond with anger and your upper body activates in preparation for fighting. If you perceive yourself as being less powerful than the challenge, your lower body activates in preparation for fleeing. If your perception is that you have no available actions to take which often happens for chronic stress situations and what I refer to as inescapable stressors, then you tend to freeze up, just like your computer does sometimes when there has been too much data input at once.

Changing Your Perception The point to all of this discussion of the perception of personal power is to say that we can change our perceptions. For people who are frozen in inaction (which could include depression and suicidal thoughts) helping them to shift their perceptions of their level of personal power can help them take steps toward healing.

This past week I attended a training to learn how to respond to assaults in the workplace. Fortunately, I have never experienced an assault personally, but I have been given the opportunity to help train others in violence prevention. I walked away from the training with increased confidence because I now know what to do if someone tries to assault me. I haven't done anything differently, but my perception of my own level of power has changed.

Affirmation: I can handle whatever life sends my way.

Quote: "Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure." -Marianne Williamson

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O c t o b e r 2 0 1 8



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The Statue of Responsibility By Jaqui Duvall, MA

Our Declaration of Independence states, "*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.*" We also have a Statue of Liberty situated on Liberty Island in New York Harbor, given to us as a gift by France.

Most people recognize the reference from "The New Colossus" which is the source of the phrase engraved at the base of the Statue, "Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free." This phrase represented a big sigh of relief for the colonists after the oppression they experienced at the hands of a distant government and also for refugees from other countries seeking freedom from an oppressor.

More than two hundred years after the colonists fought for and won their liberation and established their own constitution and government, I'm wondering if it is now time to erect another statue, a Statue of Responsibility. In my latest read, it says that the #1 most important element in creating a successful life "is to take 100% responsibility for your life.

This is not new news, but it is BIG information. If you think about what that means...it is saying that no matter what the circumstances, we take responsibility for the condition of our lives. We don't blame someone else for how much or how little money we have, how many friends we have, how stressed we are, etc. etc. etc. The logic being that everything that is in our lives at this very moment is a result of all the decisions we made up to this point. We created our lives with those decisions just as we will create the next moment with our decision in this moment.

This can be a very hard truth to hear and to know because it seems to be a natural human tendency to blame someone else for our pain. As hard as it is to admit, I know I am responsible for the choices I make and that those choices have not always gotten me where I want to be. In fact, the deepest pain I have experienced in my life is as a result of choices I made. Possibly the greatest power we have is the power to decide.

We can't control the things life brings to us, however we have an impact on what happens next by the choices we make. What choices have you made in the last 24 hours? Are they moving you in the direction you choose?

A *Statue of Responsibility* erected on the West Coast, perhaps, would be a reminder that along with the freedoms we enjoy (and still fight for) there comes great responsibility and that it is just as important as the liberty.

Recently, I was asked to step in at the last minute to give a presentation on the subject of gratitude. For many, gratitude is a way of life, not just a good idea. The power of a gratitude *practice* is that it can transform people's lives. It is an energy you can see and feel. And, no matter what happens in our lives, no matter how awful and painful (at times,) there is always something you can find to be grateful for.

For example, I was leaving the Wal-Mart parking lot recently and had an altercation with another driver. I realize that there are always two sides to every story, but I can declaratively say that nothing I did could possibly have warranted the reaction I got from the man in the bright red sporty car.

He had backed into a parking space and as I was approaching started pulling out. It startled me a little and I gently tooted my horn to make him aware of my presence so that he didn't hit me! Apparently, there is some horn language I'm not aware of. He honked back, like he's already mad? How can you tell this from the sound of a horn....? At any rate, he comes up behind me at the stoplight, gets out of his car and angrily motions for me to roll down my window. I motion that I'm not rolling down my window at which point he bangs on my window, starts yelling, cursing, calling me names that I can't repeat here. I finally use the horn again, as a call for help, other people start approaching at which point he goes back to his car.

What is there to be grateful for about this situation? First, and foremost, I'm grateful the man didn't have a gun. Just saying...

I'm also grateful for the approach of other people, young people, by the way, who were concerned and wanting to help, I'm also grateful that I walked, actually drove away unscathed and finally, I now have a story to tell of a personal experience with verbal assault which is very helpful since I just started teaching "dealing with workplace violence."

There are many things to be grateful for in life, I'm grateful that the work I do makes a difference in people's lives. I'm grateful for health and vitality, for a loving family and good friends. I'm grateful that the majority of my life is good, really good and that there is joy and laughter and fun! What is on your gratitude list?

Affirmation: I decide the course of my life.

Quote: *"You can't escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today."* -Abraham Lincoln

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Command Presence By Jaqui Duvall, MA

At my newest gig teaching workplace violence prevention I have been reminded of a very interesting concept, which is *Command Presence*. Command presence is a term that was developed in the military to describe a person who had the quality of a leader, especially those who would be leading soldiers into battle. The term has since been generalized to business and other settings.

As part of my new role, I met with the Sheriff who brought up the subject of Command Presence saying that he believes this is what employees need to develop to reduce and prevent violent incidents. When I asked how we might go about teaching it, he said the only way he has been able to teach it is through experience.

What exactly is Command Presence? Basically it is an attitude, which starts with a perception you have of yourself being strong, competent and capable of handling whatever happens. It results in verbal and non-verbal behaviors that translate to those around you indicating that you are positively utilizing your personal power, you are in charge of yourself and you know what to do should a situation arise.

I became familiar with the concept of command presence as a trainer. To effectively teach in front of a group of people, you must be viewed as someone who knows what they're talking about, that you can be trusted to put the needs of the group before the needs of the individual and you create an environment for learning that is safe for all participants.

I believe we can all work on developing Command Presence by doing a few things. First, working on Assertive Communication skills starting with the belief that 1) we are all equal; 2) each person has a legitimate perspective; 3) each person has the right to their feelings and; 4) *how* we express ourselves is much more important than what we actually say.

Second, take care of yourself, body, mind and spirit. When you exercise regularly you are building strength and a foundation of health that your mind/body perceives as powerful and therefore brings confidence.

Third, continuously educating yourself, expanding your experience and knowledge so that when you do speak you really do know what you're talking about. And finally, mindfulness, which cultivates present moment awareness.

The main reason it may be beneficial to do all of this is that with Command Presence you are perceived as a powerful person and not an easy target. When people are choosing someone to harm or steal from, it is less likely to be you. Not only that but you also feel good about yourself.

[Are you being a Leader in Your Own Life?](#) I had the extreme fortune of participating in an equine therapy workshop recently. It was one of the most amazing experiences of my life and I intend to do much more.

First, we meditated in the yard where the horses hang out (after clean up.) While I have been meditating twice a day for several years, I haven't meditated outside among living things for a really long time. It was amazing. Later I had the opportunity to do "ground work" with a single horse in a round pen. I've never done this before but discovered in this process that horses meet you where you are, not where you would like to be. I was trying so hard to "do it right" but the horse was responding to my inner desire to just connect and just kept coming up to me. I finally let go of my mental construct and joined the horse in the moment. It's hard for me to describe what that felt like but I was completely in my body, in the moment, connected with the horse. Something I've wanted to experience my entire life.

Her behavior indicated that she "liked my leadership." Where I walked, she followed. When I stopped, she stopped. When I petted her, I felt one with her like I couldn't tell the difference between my hand and her head. Not only that, but the normal every day mind chatter in my head was gone. No self-deprecating remarks or self-doubts, completely in the moment.

So what, now what? My favorite question when all the dust settles and we're back to our normal lives: How shall I live differently as a result of this experience? More than anything, I choose to live in my body. I choose to live authentically, to strive for balance between my needs and the needs of others. I choose to tell the truth. And finally, I choose to be a leader, THE leader in my own life!

Affirmation: I choose to live in my body in this moment.

Quote: *"It's hard to lead a cavalry charge if you think you look funny on a horse."* Adlai E.

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D e c e m b e r 2 0 1 8



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Currency of Needs By Jaqui Duvall, MA

I have been playing with this term *currency* relative to needs for some time now. I believe that needs deserve the term currency because, like money, we are constantly exchanging needs and need fulfillment with the people around us. And like money, some people are really good at getting their needs met, while others live in a virtual *poverty* of needs. Here is some background on the whole picture of needs.

For the first 18 years of our lives, our parents are *technically* responsible for taking care of our needs. As we grow and through our interactions with those around us, we develop a relationship to our own needs. The nature of that relationship entirely depends on what we learned about the value of our own needs relative to the value of the needs of the people around us.

In a healthy family, the primary needs of all are the first priority, making sure everyone is safe, has enough to eat, is sheltered and clothed. The emotional needs of the children and parents are balanced, meaning that there is respect for the needs of all, listening is happening and emphasis is placed on the priority need of the moment. Parents sometimes have to make challenging choices between the emotional needs of their children and their own emotional needs, but often choose in favor of their children in their effort to support their healthy emotional development. But again, it is important that there is balance.

In a not-so-healthy family, the needs of the parents tend to take precedence over the needs of the children. In fact, the parents have most likely carried forward unresolved emotional needs from their own childhoods. When this happens, they often look to their own children to fill their emotional needs. This sets up an unhealthy dynamic and unfortunately the children suffer for it. So, not only are the children trying to fill their parents' emotional needs (which they are unequipped to do,) their own emotional needs are going unmet and in addition, they get the message that their emotional needs are not important.

This experience sets these children up to have an unhealthy relationship with needs through their lives. First of all, they have a really tough time discerning their own needs because they are typically not in touch with their bodies. To survive a situation in which their emotional needs were not met and were in fact, discounted, they had to disconnect from their physical experience.

From there, people tend to polarize into one of two options: They either focus entirely on their own needs or they focus on the needs of others at the expense of their own needs. This is not a black and white polarization but a point on a spectrum. Either way, they have an unhealthy relationship with their needs.

In either case, unhealthy behavior patterns develop in an attempt to get needs met such as manipulation, passive aggressive behavior, controlling behavior, people-pleasing etc. The lack of a healthy relationship with their own needs is very painful and people often develop addictive behaviors and unhealthy relationships with others as well.

A Health Relationship with Needs

To learn how to have a healthy relationship with our needs,

- 1) We need to recognize that we didn't get our needs met in the original family dynamic; we need to grieve what we didn't get and grieve getting anything we didn't need.
- 2) We need to connect inwardly with ourselves to be able to discern the constantly changing inner landscape of our needs and desires.
- 3) We need to redefine our relationship with our needs to realize their equal value with the needs of all others.
- 4) We need to take responsibility for our need fulfillment. While we may learn to exchange (currency)

Affirmation: I am responsible for my needs and their fulfillment.

Quote: *“You will be your best self when you take time to understand what you really need, feel and want.” — Deborah Day*

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