

Give Up the Illusion of Control

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An audience member wrote to me, "I would like to learn more about: *why give up control?*" The thoughts below are my response.

Since my background is in psychology I base much of my work on the unconscious beliefs we carry from our childhood. When we are children we are truly vulnerable and dependant upon our parents for survival. Ideally, each year of life we are guided to gain a little more independence. If our parents did a top notch job, we walk into adulthood knowing how to care for ourselves physically, mentally, emotionally, socially and even spiritually. However, most parents have weakness and let our children down in some form or other. Some parents have huge wounds that spew out and upon their children—naming calling, swearing, physical lashing out, invading and/or neglectfulness. Sometimes alcoholism is involved and sometimes dysfunctional ways of dealing with poor mental health. Consequently children don't automatically get their needs met.

Picture a three to seven year old experiencing abuse or neglect. It is beyond the child's thinking to figure out what is really happening. Plus, it is too psychologically risky to conclude, "Something is wrong with my mommy or daddy. I need someone else to look after me." Instead, what typically happens is the child concludes, "There is something wrong with me. If I act smarter, quieter, louder or prettier then mommy or daddy will love me and look after me." The child begins to make the face, say the lines and act in such a way that works in the family. It's about survival. It's about being resilient. Regrettably, those strategies become automatic responses (unconscious). As adults living in a broader world arena with expanded relationships those strategies may become inappropriate. Hence, we tend to continue to unsuccessfully try to control our outer world to meet our unnamed needs.

Notice yourself and others. Most of us try to control (manipulate or influence) one another to get what we need psychologically by being nicer or louder, gentler or stronger, admiring or smarter. I have a tendency to be a people pleaser. Based on my childhood experiences,

"You can not always control circumstances, but you can control your own thoughts."

Charles Popplestown

I tend to feel anxious when people express anger or dislike. Sometimes professional speaking feels scary, for me, as if I am a disapproval target. But that is based on my old story of, "survival depends on always being liked."

A new story is, "I survive, even thrive and my work benefits many." There are those who wake up grumpy, feel ill or are carrying some sort of burden or worry. It is fruitless to make efforts to control everyone in the audience and have them like me. Do I find myself flipping into trying to make others like me so I feel safe and cared for? Absolutely! My pattern is my pattern. But, once aware of our pattern, we can work with it, minimize it and move to more empowering behaviors.

10 Tips to Give Up the Illusion of Control

1. Notice if and when your sense of well being relies on others doing what you want.
2. Develop a witness that notices. Notice how your body feels and the story you tell yourself.
3. Ask yourself, "How is this feeling and story familiar?"
4. Identify what belief you need or want from others.
5. Make your requests in a healthy and responsible way. Example: "I want you listen to me for 10 minutes."
6. Remind yourself, "When I was a kid I didn't have choices. Now I am responsible for my well being and can keep myself safe and out of harm's way.
7. Feel the old anxiety of needing approval and realize it's an old story.
8. Assure yourself that your adult self makes decisions in mutually respectful ways.
9. As you make healthy choices, notice how you become stronger and more resilient.
10. Read the article "Why Explore Our Childhood?" at this link
www.solutionsforresilience.comwww/pdf/Why%20Explore%20Our%20Childhood.pdf

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