

Relationship Rehab Show

FREE DOWNLOAD Show #5: Childhood Dreams Fulfilled

Getting Acquainted with Nancy, Shows #1 and #5

Preface to **Your Inner Child: a Path to Healing and Freedom**



I was drowning in depression. My marriage was in major trouble. My elder son was out of control and using drugs. I couldn't sleep. I was binge eating and quickly losing my slim figure. It took every ounce of energy I had to get out of bed. I remember wondering if I cared enough to put on makeup each morning. Every piece of evidence that I counted on to validate that I was a good woman was disintegrating. I felt powerless to stop the destruction of the image of myself that, up until then, I thought to be the real me.

I bought a book recommended by a friend called, "Confessions of a Closet Eater" by Jackie Barille. I opened the pages and couldn't put the book down. She shared how she healed herself of a pernicious eating disorder by learning to work with and love her inner child. Because of my strict religious upbringing, the concept sounded weird to me. About 2 a.m. I cried out to God, "Is it Ok if I have an inner child?" I immediately and strongly heard Jesus's words, "Suffer (allow) the little children to come to me and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of Heaven." Luke 18:17

An image came to mind of a little girl about four years old. She was shyly, hesitantly coming out of a deep, dark cave. She was emaciated. Her hair was dirty and tangled. Her clothing was in tatters. She had obviously been neglected for a very long time.

The contrast between this poor child and the put-together, competent, polished woman I presented to the world was shocking! This neglected child represented the truth of who I was on the inside...the part of me that I was trying so hard to hide from myself and others.

Shortly after that I made an appointment with Jackie. After pouring out my heart accompanied by many tears, I plaintively asked, "Can you help me?"

With her compassionate guidance, I began to hear the loneliness and desperation and pain of my inner child. Other than Jim, this was the first time in my life there was someone who allowed, even encouraged me to cry about my past and present misery. I cried through every session for the first several months that we met. Jackie taught me how to comfort that wounded child, and eventually to set loving boundaries for her...and so the journey of healing began.



A large part of the work was uncovering the beliefs by which I was running my life. These were beliefs like, “I have to be perfect in order to be loved.” And, “Working myself to exhaustion is demonstrating my value.” And, “Only if I have perfectly behaved children will I know I’m a good mother.” And, “Crying doesn’t help anything. So, stop crying!” And, “Looking good on the outside (good body, nice clothes, calm demeanor, clean house) means I should be happy...my life is good.” And, “It’s shameful to have problems in your marriage, or your children, or be depressed, or have gained weight. How could you?!”

As we explored these and other beliefs together, it was clear that they were not giving me the quality of life for which I longed. In order to experience the healing power of unconditional love, I would have to abandon many of my current beliefs and replace them with beliefs that would point the way to better emotional health, whether or not the outer circumstances changed.

Food for thought:

Have you ever gone through such a dark time that you couldn’t even imagine it ever coming to an end? Or how you might survive it? Let alone any good ever coming from that darkness! Perhaps you are in such a place now...

Jackie told me that the day would come when I would be grateful that my life, as I knew it then, fell apart. I look back now and realize it was only the façade of me that came unglued, giving me the freedom (although excruciatingly painful) to begin to live a more authentic life. Now, I am truly grateful for those years when it seemed as though I was being buried alive, but as the crops of the first half of my life were being plowed under, the seeds were being planted for the fulfillment of my childhood dreams.

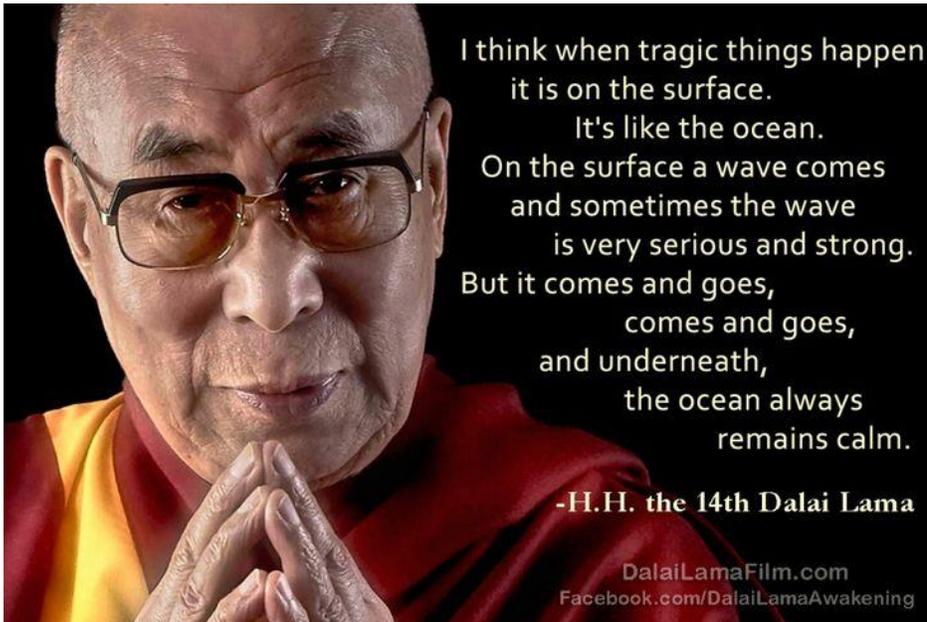
Years later Jim and I began a spiritual practice of learning how to live without anxiety. We came to visualize two realities...one very firmly rooted here on earth, and another invisible reality that occasionally we may glimpse, but are invited to trust at all times.

I have a small plaque that says, “Live like there’s heaven on earth.” I will not try to impose my spiritual beliefs on you, only share my own for your consideration. My belief is that anxiety is unnecessary in heaven. So is any form of fear, leaving only peace and love. Anxiety is an emotion experienced on earth. But what if we could live without anxiety while still here? What would it take?

As we pursued the goal of an anxiety free life, layer after layer of worries were uncovered. Slowly we were feeling more at peace. Then Jim was diagnosed with terminal cancer. I asked God, "Is it ok to worry now?" The answer was, "No. Trust me."

So, we went through the next year of improvements and set-backs with moments of great fear, but largely at peace. After Jim died, I grieved deeply, sometimes railing at God for my beloved's death. But also, in the depths of my soul, believing that there was ultimately a redeeming purpose to even this pain.

I love this quote by the Dalai Lama:



Just for the exercise, ask yourself, "What if the current circumstances are perfectly chosen to teach me what I was sent here to learn? What if I will look back ten years from now and be grateful for what I am being forced to learn now?" If that view is taken, how would it change how you are navigating through your current circumstances?

Please understand that I do not claim to have been perfectly at peace through all the challenges of my life! Learning to live within a circle of Ease and Grace is still a daily, strenuous exercise! But I am getting better at noticing the anxious thoughts and replacing them with thoughts of trust.

Thank you for joining me on this journey, and wishing you peace on yours,

Nancy Landrum