

Relationship Rehab Show

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Heal Yourself with Inner Child Work

Order Nancy's book, **Your Inner Child: a Path to Healing and Freedom**

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Define the Inner Child

The Inner Child is the part in all of us who feels our feelings, remembers our memories and is doing her best to be loved. (For writing ease I'm referring to the Inner Child as a she, but, of course, for males it is a he.)

There are two aspects to every Inner Child. One is the Perfectionist Child. She is the one who loves rules and routines. At her best, she helps us remember to brush our teeth or how to drive the car. She is a repository of helpful information. At her worst, she is dictatorial, judgmental, quick to find fault and wants to *make us be her definition of good* so that she'll get the love she needs.

The other aspect of the Inner Child is the Rebellious Child. She's the part in us that takes us to bed when we're tired or makes sure we have enough fun in our lives. She tries to bring balance to the Perfectionist Child's demands for constant work. When she's had enough of the Perfectionist Child's criticism or is exhausted from Perfectionist Child's overwork, she looks for ways to let off steam...rebel. That might be rerun watching as a couch potato for a day, or a buying splurge, or eating a gallon of ice cream. Addictions are the behavior of a Rebellious Child when inner wounds haven't been healed or she's been beaten up by the Perfectionist Child.

Define the Loving Parent

The Perfectionist Child is often mistaken for the parent because she sounds so authoritative, sure of herself and bossy. But the Perfectionist Child isn't compassionate or forgiving or capable of balancing work with play. Those are the characteristics of the Loving Parent.

What the Loving Parent Does

The Loving Parent is an aspect that I had to develop. I didn't know how to forgive my own mistakes, or quit working when I was tired or stop eating before the whole package of cookies

were gone. When resting or enjoying a creative activity, Perfectionist Child was on my case for not doing enough, not being good enough. Rebellious Child would rebel by overeating and over spending.

Severe depression and weight gain drove me to look for help. I found Jackie Barille, the author of **Confessions of a Closet Eater**. She'd been where I was at, and healed her eating disorder by doing Inner Child work with herself. She helped me learn how to listen to the years of built-up pain and suffering the Inner Child had been harboring. She gave me permission to grieve, cry, rage. I wrote out painful memories in my journal and for the first time had permission to be angry.

As you've no doubt heard by now, my parents loved me the best that they knew how, but there was little warmth, no cuddling, no "I love you's," no compliments or reassurances. There was shelter, food, clothing and strict teachings from the local church. That was my model of parenting. Perfectionist Child was pretending to be an adult, knowledgeable parent by modeling herself after the worst of my human parents. That's why it's easy to mistake Perfectionist Child for the Loving Parent.

The Loving Parent however, doesn't berate, beat into submission, or judge the Inner Child. The Loving Parent is patient, forgiving and accepting of the imperfections found in both Perfectionist and Rebellious Child. After building up trust in her loving parenting skills, the Loving Parent takes the decision making away from both Perfectionist Child and Rebellious Child. So, when Perfectionist Child insists on working until I drop from exhaustion, Loving Parent steps in and says, "No. You've done enough for today. It's time to rest." When Perfectionist Child beats herself up with merciless criticism because she made a mistake, or hasn't pleased someone, or failed a test, Loving Parent steps in and says, "Stop this right now. I will not let you beat yourself up. That doesn't help. I do not expect you to be perfect. Failing a test is part of learning. Someone being unhappy with you is just part of life. It doesn't mean you are bad or undeserving of love."

When I realized how much control Perfectionist Child had been exerting over my life, I told her, "For the next two months I will not do anything you tell me to do!" It was a drastic measure, but I had to convince Perfectionist Child that she was no longer in control.

When Perfectionist Child's excessive control was stopped, Rebellious Child's excessive behaviors also slowed down and then stopped. Both aspects of my Inner Child longed for the loving, reasonable control of the Loving Parent to bring them into balance. Eventually Perfectionist Child and Rebellious Child learned to enjoy and appreciate the qualities that each brought to my life. Perfectionist Child brings responsibility and consistency. Rebellious Child

brings spontaneity, fun and rest. As long as the Loving Parent is the ultimate authority, I enjoy freedom from being pulled back and forth between these two aspects and experience inner peace!

An Old Example

My severe depression was caused by an excess of self-judgment from the Perfectionist Child and a boat load of hurt and anger from my past. Gaining loving authority over the Perfectionist Child was only part of the journey. The other part was giving permission to my wounded Inner Child to talk about the causes of her pain. She needed me, the Loving Parent, to hear about events in her childhood that deeply wounded her. She needed to be heard and comforted...validated that the pain was real...let her cry and rage! She needed the adult Nancy to believe her, to agree that those events were very hurtful...that she had every right to be in pain. As I listened, let her cry, comforted her, the pain gradually dissipated. The memories are still there but they do not carry the intense pain with them anymore.

A Current Example

A few months ago, I recognized some signs of burnout...frequent irritation, feeling overloaded, impatience with a client. I knew I needed some down time. My Saturday and Sunday that week were clear, so I made a reservation at a beachside hotel and ran away from home for two nights! I napped, read my novel, walked in the sand and had a wonderful Sunday brunch before starting home. I felt refreshed, but also knew it wasn't enough.

Later that week I decided to take every fourth week off from coaching couples. AND, I booked an Airbnb for 3 days in late October. I also began asking a few friends over on Sunday afternoons to play table games, one of my favorite recreational activities. My Loving Parent got the message loud and clear. The addition of preparing for and recording the TV show on top of my other responsibilities had almost pushed me over the edge. Loving Parent has taken steps to ensure that I don't get that close to burnout again!

Your Inner Child: a Path to Healing and Freedom will expand on this pdf and give you many more tips about how to stop the inner war, facilitate healing of old wounds, and bring you inner peace.

You have my love and support,

Nancy Landrum