

Intimacy & Revenge

When a child is repeatedly hurt, whether through mental or physical abuse, he ‘shuts down’ as a form of self-protection from future pain and anguish. This largely unconscious decision to ‘close’ himself will remain locked in his psyche throughout adolescence and into adulthood unless he takes steps to release it and ‘open’ once again. The coat of armour he wears beneath the surface of his outer sociability will make him unavailable and unable to open his heart and mind to another human being. This is the tragedy of abuse. As an adult he will probably fall in love, enjoy the blissful ‘honeymoon’ of a new, exciting relationship and perhaps consider marriage. However, as the novelty and passion of his new love slowly wears off, his underlying fear of intimacy will begin to assert itself. His partner’s love for him will threaten his self-imposed isolation by calling on him to surrender, open up and trust. His unconscious conditioning will interpret such a demand as dangerous and he will begin to experience his spouse’s attention as pressure. In fact, the pressure he feels will be his own fear and internal resistance, but his mind will project the source of his discomfort onto his partner. He will feel she is pushing him and being unreasonable, so he will begin to push back. Anger and fear will be the energy driving his reaction, in effect causing him to respond to her call for intimacy with attack. He will become the proverbial man who being afraid of his own shadow strikes it furiously with a stick.

‘His partner’s love for him will threaten his self-imposed isolation’

Accompanying the unresolved hurt he has been carrying since childhood will be a mass of unresolved anger and frustration waiting to explode. Parent-child abuse often follows a family lineage wherein the unhealed hurt and anger of the parent gets transferred to the child through a form of abuse similar to what the parent himself suffered as a child. The child is not allowed to express his outrage at being abused and nor was his abusive parent. Showing anger to an abusive parent will only call forth more abuse for the child, and it is this suppression of his self-expression that perpetuates a syndrome of familial abuse from one generation to the next. Sometimes the suppression will take the form of verbal violence, such as, ‘Shut up and do what you are told!’ and other times the violence will be physical. Either way, violent parental disapproval will suppress a child’s capacity to communicate his thoughts and feelings and he will learn to lock his emotions inside. Since repressed emotions carry their own energy, energy that demands an outlet, they will be either ‘somatised’ within his body and eventually manifest as an illness, or else projected onto his surrounding environment. In the latter instance, it may manifest in children as devious, vindictive or violent behaviour, such as tormenting smaller children, animals, and the elderly or handicapped. It may also manifest as a reaction to any expression of love in the form of either passive withdrawal or aggressive rejection. In either case, both fear and anger will be the underlying emotions.

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Blocked emotions, particularly anger, are the basis of the 'revenge pattern'. Suppressed rage will evolve into an ever-increasing resentment that will eat away like a cancer. It takes just one bad experience with fire for the 'body-mind' to make the decision, unconsciously, that *all* fire is dangerous. The same rule applies to relationships: it takes one seriously abusive incident to make the decision that all close relationships are potentially harmful and therefore to be avoided. At the same time, however, intimacy is a natural desire of all human beings and so a 'pull/push' dynamic is set up in our relationships. We are attracted to someone and begin to get close, i.e., we are *pulled*, then just as real intimacy is about to unfold we do or say something to sabotage the relationship, i.e., we *push*. Moreover, this sabotage is energised with a desire for revenge for past hurts, and the repressed anger we have been carrying within us will get targeted at the person whose love and attention is threatening our self-imposed isolation.

Revenge is the contrary of an open heart because it is the refusal to feel the underlying feelings of hurt and helplessness and move beyond them. Rather, it is the choice to dominate by remaining 'shut down', thus creating a false sense of power, strength and control. It is getting even in present time with innocent people for past wrongs suffered at the hands of others. So, our spouse, children and even pets get the rage ultimately and unconsciously intended for someone else. The tendency to leave or 'dump' relationships is also a form of vengeance: we abandon others because we were abandoned. The expression, 'You always hurt the one you love', is pure revenge pattern. *Feeling the feelings* of past pain in present circumstances, by neither denying these feelings nor projecting them onto innocent others, is the only way to break this pattern. Deep, conscious breathing as we are *being with* these emotions leads to forgiveness. It takes courage, as well as a commitment to integrity in our relationships to erase this unconscious mechanism, but it will be done through self-honesty and communication. The revenge pattern is a major block to our success in life, in relationships, in career, with money, even with our own health, and forgiveness is the key to healing it.

'We abandon others because we were abandoned.'

Any expression of hate is actually self-hatred projected onto another. In the instance of child abuse, the child comes to loath not only his abuser but also himself. The physical or verbal assault on his *person* crushes his sense of self-worth and, perceiving himself as a weak and helpless victim, he feels utterly devalued. When a child's natural self-esteem is seriously undermined, what is left is self-contempt. His anger, which fear of retaliation pushes him to internalise and suppress, is secretly directed at both his abuser and himself. Resentment unconsciously directed at the self will drive a pattern of self-punishment that may take the form of illness or accidents; it may also push him to sabotage his own projects or relationships and to engage in dangerous, self-destructive behaviour. This same self-hatred will also be directed toward others. Since he loathes himself, he will also loathe those who love and would respect him. Not being conscious of the real source of his distaste for intimacy, he will find fault with anyone who gets too close and push that person away. Faultfinding is the weapon he will use to justify his contempt and isolation. Others will perceive him as unduly harsh, critical and judgmental and learn to keep their distance. When he hurts others and drives them away, he is exacting revenge

on those who hurt him in the past. As well, he is exacting revenge on himself by rejecting what he most deeply wants, love and intimacy.

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