

WALKING THROUGH THE MEMORIES

In re-parenting we refocus our energy. We use our experience, intelligence, and education to bring closure to unprocessed memories, our feelings about the memories, and the life decisions we made. We pinpoint specific memories, fragments of memories, or our feelings about memories, express our feelings, and challenge the rules we decided upon about how to live our lives. When we reject the old, survival rules, they cease to have power over us. Then we replace the negative admonitions with positive, healthy beliefs.

NEGOTIATING WITH OUR INNER CHILDREN

After establishing relationships with our Inner Children, we may find instances where they become very insistent on having things. They may actually want those things for amusement, to provide closure for past, unresolved situations, or to be assured by us that we really care.

As new Inner Parents we respond to these desires as we would if we were dealing with actual children. Generally our Inner Children just want attention and reassurance. When actual children ask for ponies, parents automatically divert attention to something else, like ice cream cones. So it is with our Inner Children. It isn't the objects that are important; it's our attention they are really after.

Where two people want different things, compromises are often made. If Loving Parents need to finish reports for work, they can negotiate with their Inner Children to let them get the job done and then take their Inner Children out to do something fun. The key is to keep the promises.

BUILDING TRUST WITH INNER CHILDREN

We keep our promises! Our Inner Children just want to be loved and treated respectfully, but they are wary of us for good reason. We let others abuse them, and we abused them, too. We made promises to them that we broke.

After apologizing and promising them we will listen to them, love them, take care of them, keep our promises, and keep them safe, we actually have to do that. We have to be careful to make only promises we can keep. We also have to apologize and make amends if we fail to

keep our end of the bargains. Like any children, our Inner Children respond well to consistency, follow-

through, honesty, and love. Our Inner Children do not expect us to be super-human, only to love, support, honor, and protect them as well as we can.

Ultimately, we are working toward integrating the parts of ourselves that were fragmented and/or compartmentalized as a result of our inability as children to process overwhelming experiences of neglect, abuse, and/or trauma.

Becoming Our Own Loving Parents



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“The solution is to become your own loving parent.” As we work our 12-Step recovery in ACA, it is important to meet, form relationships with, and communicate daily with our Inner Children.

WE BECOME OUR OWN LOVING PARENTS

The Inner Child is that part of us that was closest to God in the beginning when we were born innocent. As we grew, some of us were neglected which impeded our growth. Some of us were traumatized with no emotional support to move beyond this condition. The rest of us were abused, and we shut down emotionally. As a result we grew up physically and intellectually, but not emotionally.

In our recovery process we re-experience unresolved events and bring closure to them, thereby completing the growth of each developmental stage. To do this we become our own loving parents, nurturing, protecting, and guiding our Inner Children.

THE PARENTS HELP THE CHILDREN GROW

The concept of becoming our own loving parents means that the part of us that does have the skills of a healthy, nurturing adult ensures that the hurt children get opportunities to be safe, have fun, work through childhood problems, and grow up to be responsible, serene people.

WHY WE CONTACT OUR INNER CHILDREN

There are several reasons we reawaken our dormant Inner Children. Each one of our Inner Children has access to all of the memories and feelings that we buried. They are the God-given parts of us that still believe, still hope, still try, and still forgive. They are the parts of us that are happy, joyous, and free. And they will also sabotage all our efforts to improve our lives if we don't deal with them lovingly and respectfully.

Inner Child work is the fastest method to recovery since only our Inner Children know where to gather the information they stored “to deal with later.” As adults, with greater education and experience, we can then locate, review, and process neglect, abuse, and/or trauma providing closure to those situations. This closure fills in the emotional gaps and allows us to complete particular developmental stages which results in emotional growth.

The Inner Child is that part of us in which resides the joy, the spontaneity, the happiness, and the serenity we are seeking. We need for this part of us to survive for recovery to occur.

We form respectful relationships with our Inner Children. If we keep abusing our Inner Children in the same way our parents or caretakers did, our recovery will be impeded. When we unchain our Inner Children from the neglect, abuse, and trauma of childhood, we are able to put our lives together.

Our Inner Children already control us. When we procrastinate, it's our Inner Children who are acting out. When we explode, it's our Inner Children who will be not be silent any longer. When we can't get organized it's our Inner Children who are overwhelmed. When we spend too much time, effort, or energy, our Inner Children are at the helm. Our Inner Children can be our best friends or our worst enemies. It is in our best interests to have healthy relationships with our Inner Children so we all get our needs and wants met.

CONTACTING OUR INNER CHILDREN

Some of us have been introduced to our Inner Children with visualization. Some of us use our childhood photographs. Some draw children with crayons. Some select dolls or stuffed animals. The images may also change with the problems our Inner Children are working through. The genders of our Inner Children may change. We must be aware that our Inner Children may not like us or trust us very much and may hide.

COMMUNICATING WITH THEM

Communicating with our Inner Children requires setting aside a block of time each day (perhaps half-an-hour) to talk with them at a time and place where we will not be interrupted. We can talk or write, but we are basically going through the same conversation we might have with real or estranged children. Designating stuffed animals, childhood photos of us, or drawings of us as children can be helpful to look at as we write or converse.

We introduce ourselves and say, “Hello!” We apologize for ignoring, not protecting, not listening, abusing them, and/or letting others abuse them. We tell them how we will rectify similar situations in the future with honest, consistent, follow-through on all

commitments we make. We ask gentle questions, listen to and accept their responses, and respectfully answer their questions. At the end of each session we schedule and commit to the time and place of the next conversation.

We currently communicate with our Inner Children. They often tell us what they want - ice cream or Porsches, new tools, clothing, pets, houses, or people. These are our Inner Children saying, “Gimme, pay attention to me.” Our Inner Children are also the ones who throw tantrums when we break promises to them, e.g., working overtime when we promised to play; not standing up for ourselves, procrastinating, engaging in addictive or risky behavior, setting ourselves up for abusive responses...

Our relationships with our Inner Children improve as we improve our behavior toward them. Our Inner Children will let us know quickly and automatically when we, or someone else, abuses them so that we, the Parents, can stop the abuse. At first we may need to rehearse appropriate responses to common abusive situations we encounter regularly.

Eventually our Inner Children learn to monitor their feelings and alert us to personal violations that we automatically handle assertively. Working with our Inner Children, instead of against them, will result in accomplishing more, having more fun, and becoming more serene.

OUR INNER CHILDREN MAY NOT LOVE US

If we start to make contact with our Inner Children and very scary emotions or thoughts come up, we need to stop. Surfacing fear and altered states are clear indications that we may very well need the guidance of our sponsors or licensed therapists, experienced and educated to lead us through this aspect of our discovery/recovery process. Our very honest Inner Children are making clear statements.

Like any angry children, our Inner Children are sputtering things they don't literally mean. If they say, for example, “I will kill you,” what they really mean is that they want us to look at them, listen to them, love them, spend time with them, and be their loving parents. Therapists can safely guide us through such encounters.