

CHARLYNE GELT, PH.D.

Encouraging Self-Discovery and Empowerment



Mother's Day . . . Mothering is All Year Long by Charlyne Gelt, Ph.D.



“No language can express the power, and beauty and heroism of a mother’s love.”
Edwin Chapin



A popular poem says that God cannot be everywhere and so he created mothers (Helen Steiner Rice). The relationship between a mother and a child is very special. A mother’s love has power . . . to awaken the child’s psychological self, establish trust, roots and a firm foundation for emotional intimacy. When those needs get met, the child also learns to tolerate anxiety. When that love is withheld, the psychological self remains dormant, or shut down, and the child will look for it in a multitude of other ways including things that fill the empty caverns of the self and quiet his/her anxiety. An unmet hunger for the strength of an intelligent, nurturing, emotionally available maternal model breeds a lack of communication and coping skills to effectively deal with chaos, especially today’s crisis.

Mothering has never been more important than in the midst of our current crisis that has led to chaos, fear, and high levels of anxiety. We are in the midst of change, at war, with an invisible danger and an unknown outcome. This is a really stressful, uncomfortable shoe to wear for everyone but especially for those needing control and external certainty; it threatens their very core. Without a firm, foundation, without a secure holding environment or deep roots to hang on to, change and uncertainty may also trigger earlier trauma, fear, isolation, and abandonment

issues. Moving forward, letting go of the known, leaving the safety of the shore, is filled with anxiety and uncertainty . . . and excitement and opportunity. Ask yourself, “what's the stumbling block to being all you can be?” “How can you discover your higher purpose and embody it in your life?” “What might the “new normal” look like?” It, change, often means that we leave behind those who hang on, who remain hooked to destructive patterns, and thus are resistant to our evolving emotional growth.

Do You Know What Love and Acceptance Look Like?

Are you afraid of getting close? Afraid of being vulnerable? Afraid of being hurt? Do you shut down verbally or emotionally? Do you get pushed away, distanced, or cut off by a partner? Perhaps the reasons have little to do with the present but are more likely rooted in long-ago bonding and acceptance.

There are many adults who, to avoid pain, use “protective psychological defenses” in their relationships. These defenses provide us with a certain comfortable distance or “comfort zone” for internalized fears left over from family of origin issues. But they are at the expense of developing healthy emotional relationships.

Abandonment, isolation, and fear are key issues that keep one stuck in that old protective pumpkin shell. The protective armor of adaptive childhood survival strategies transfers into adult relationships, often preventing one from creating change. It becomes a comfortable shoe.

In some cases, individuals will seek out partners who react to their own early wounds in similar ways — by shutting down, withdrawing, or violently lashing out. Such couples are a perfect fit. Mutual, early unmet needs get repeated in adulthood — a common thread that both binds, and blinds, them to one another, each one attempting to overcome their past hurt, trauma and conflict in the present. Drawn like magnets to one another, each unconsciously hopes to get early childhood needs met by the other, resulting in relationship disasters that once again foster isolation, withdrawal, neglect, shame, and even violence.

Sadly, couples like this may have been using their self-protective “shield” defenses for so long that they have never even experienced what *healthy* love and acceptance looks like and feels like. Fortunately, all is not lost! As the 13th-century poet quoted above, Rumi, suggests — no matter how something looks on the outside, the seeds to a great life are stored within us. In individual or group therapy situations, self-protective individuals can learn new tools. They can become more aware of what is getting in the way of emotional intimacy, learn what part they are still playing in their sinking, relationship boat, and start taking actions to remedy the problem.

The fear of being alone, and a lifetime of feeling emotionally isolated, drew Lois into a long-term relationship with an alcoholic with whom she didn't feel close enough to say, “I love you.” *“What I wanted and needed was for him to listen. I got a deaf ear and I got no support. I got put down, shamed and blamed.”*

When you can say: “I don't deserve to be treated like this” and you recognize you are allowing yourself to be short-changed, then it's time to turn the corner and put that nurturing into the self.

Thank you for your support!

Charlyne Gelt, Ph.D.

www.drgelt.com