



Inner Child Healing

You may not be consciously aware that you're being controlling. But anytime we are prone to controlling our world, whether that be the people in it, or the circumstances we face, our job, or even which emotions we'll allow ourselves to feel or not feel, it is highly probable that there has been an event in our past usually in our childhood between the ages of 5 and 10 when we felt utterly out of control, vulnerable, and at the effect of someone else.

This could be a traumatic experience like physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, but also could be something as simple as being pulled too fast in a wagon by a sibling downhill. You're totally scared and out of control. Regardless of the event itself, you experienced a plethora of emotions in that moment and your brain decided that those were the negative emotions to avoid at all costs going forward in your life. And the emotional brain decided that in order to never experience those kinds of deep painful negative feelings again it would be best to try to manipulate and control our environment. We believed that as long as we were in control of things, we could avoid them. This might be a conscious or a subconscious effort.

This is the point of decision for the "inner child." Making these decisions at such a young age only utilize the primal or emotional brain, as the pre-frontal cortex (the logic and reasoning) has not yet been fully developed. Hence, the processing of the event is limited to the rationale of the emotions. And emotions have no rationale.

Now, as we grew our "inner child" continued to protect us from the vulnerability of fear, shame, and all the other negative emotions. So, we find ourselves as adults who are desperately trying to get people to act a certain way, or we're staying away from certain challenges or anything that's new, or we're creating such rigid structure around our lives so that nothing could penetrate it. And we're trying to figure out why we can't enjoy life, rest in ease, be content, and love people well. What has occurred is a fragmentation of processing that needs defragmenting.

One way we do this is by bringing your adult brain - your pre-frontal cortex - to the past event in order to defragment. You do this by bringing logic and reasoning to the heightened emotions of the past event in order to make them congruent. They become one - integrated. You are not dismissing or trying to erase the past event, just bringing the adult brain to give new understanding and new processing, or new perspectives.

We all have an "inner child". She's important to us and we want to give her great compassion. This exercise is not to blame or shame her or put her in her place!

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Here is how you begin to defragment the processed event in your mind and begin to heal the “inner child.” I encourage you to invite the Holy Spirit to help you in this process. To begin, you're going to write a letter to “little you.” You'll start with letter with “Dear little Tricia...” for example. And you're going to want to write down *all the details of one specific event* from the past at a time, as well as the feelings that come up with it. This will be the emotional processing from the primal brain. Then you're going to want to bring in logic and reasoning to each emotional thought. You'll integrate the two by talking to “little you” about what she experienced (the events and emotions). Think of this part as a scene in a movie and you are just observing it. As you watch the event unfold, what are the things you would logically and reasonably deduce? As you begin to write you'll need to have great compassion for her. She was small, frightened, and likely should have never experienced what she did. You need to tell her as much. I like to think of what I might say to my daughter at age 8 if she experienced something frightening and or traumatic. Saying something like, “Little Tricia, you did not deserve what you experienced. And you are not responsible for it at all. I am so sorry that you had to go through that. I know that you were frightened and thought you might die, but you didn't. You survived. You were strong.” Or you might say something like, “When mom did that, you thought maybe she didn't love you. But she did. The way she behaved, though, was out of her own unhealed wounds and insecurities. But it didn't mean you weren't loved.” Speak with logic and reason.

After you've gone thought-by-thought and brought in logic and reasoning, you need to release the “inner child” from what she felt like was her responsibility, and that is to protect you from feeling those negative emotions ever again. We are going to thank her for caring for you so much to protect you all this time. Let her know that you are now an adult and you are safe, strong, and capable of handling any emotion that may come your way. Let her know she doesn't need to protect you any longer, release her of responsibility, and watch her finally breathe a sigh of relief.

Your “inner child” will always be with you. She's part of you. But now that she's released, she can be a child again - skipping and dancing in life with unhindered joy. And “adult” you will finally feel the freedom to let go of trying to control your world. Let go and live in the beauty and power of vulnerable freedom so that every day you are experiencing and expressing joy, creativity, belonging, and love, and so much more!

- Step 1: Identify an early childhood memory (close to age 5 though 10) that has intense emotions attached to it.
- Step 2: Write a letter beginning with “Dear little (your name)”. You might say, “I know you experienced _____.” Write all the details of the event, including the emotions you felt.
- Step 3: Still addressing “little you,” use your Adult brain with logic and reasoning to bring new perspectives and understandings to the event itself.
- Step 4: Release the “inner child” from all responsibility of protecting you from emotions. Let her go and assure her that you've got this.