

# Another Beautiful Life

## COACHING

### **Inner Child Healing**

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Any time we are prone to controlling our world (whether that be the people in it, the circumstances we face, our job, or even which emotions we'll allow ourselves to feel or not feel) or we find that we're at the mercy of how someone else believes we should act, think, or 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. 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 cost 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.

This is the point of decision for the "inner child." Making these decisions at such a young age only utilized the primal (emotional) brain, as the pre-frontal cortex (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 and shame, and 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 a rigid structure around our lives so that nothing could penetrate it. Or, our inner child finally surrenders to allow someone else to dictate how we think, act, or feel, giving away our power and agency of independence. Now we're trying to figure out why we can't enjoy life, rest in ease, be content, and make decisions for ourselves. What has occurred is a fragmentation of processing that needs defragmenting.

One way to 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. You are not dismissing or trying to erase the past event, just bringing the adult brain to give new information, understanding, and new processing.

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So, here's how you begin to defragment the processed event in your mind and begin to heal the "inner child." You are going to write a letter to "Little You." You'll start the letter with, "Dear Little Tricia..." for example. As you begin to write you'll need to have great compassion for her. She was small and frightened. 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. You can even tell her, "I'm so sorry that happened to you. You should've never experienced that. You didn't deserve to have that happen, and it was not your fault"

Next, you're going to write down all the details of the specific event from the past, 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 some new understanding (logic and reasoning) to each emotional thought. Integrate the two by saying something like, "I know you were frightened and thought you might die, but you didn't. You survived. You were strong. Now here are some logical reasons we might entertain as to why things happened the way they did." For example, if your Mother was emotionally abusive, you may be able to bring new information such as her own abuse as a child to bring understanding as to why she abused. Again, it doesn't condone or dismiss her behavior, just brings new understanding to the event. When the brain is presented with new information, it cannot help but make a shift.

After you've gone thought-by-thought and brought the logic and reasoning, you need to release the "inner child" from what she's felt like was her responsibility, and that is to protect you from feeling those negative emotions ever again. 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. You may say, "Thank you for trying to protect me and keep me safe all my life." 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, and to take back any power or agency you've handed over to someone else. Now you can live in the beauty of all that God created you to be!