

Finding Wisdom in your Relationships

~Journaling exercise~

In our relationships other people are a mirror for our own discomfort. Blind spots are often made visible in our interactions with others, which can be triggering.

When you realize that this is how relationships work and keep an open mind, you can gain lots of wisdom from your relationships. While this sounds easy, it is a challenging and often painful process.

If you find it challenging to truly face the conflicts with others you can have 'open accounts' with certain people.

What is an 'open account'?

You have an open account with people that trigger old pain and sensitivities in you. Your interactions with that person (subconsciously) bring up thoughts and unprocessed feelings. It is like a scar that hasn't fully healed, and every time someone pushes the wrong button (or the right one, depending on how you choose to look at it :-), the wound reopens.

A few examples of open accounts:

- You tend to keep your deepest feelings hidden, because you feel like your partner wouldn't listen or understand how you feel.
- You notice that you and your partner or a good friend have such different perspectives on certain things that you can only see the differences, and you can't feel the loving connection anymore.

These are examples of coping behaviour, coming from your upbringing. When you ignore these feelings for too long it costs you a lot of energy and it has a major (often destructive) impact on your relationships.

Other examples of coping mechanisms that you may experience in your interactions with coworkers, at home with your family or with other loved ones are getting defensive, complaining, criticizing, judging, trying really hard, becoming dominant or submissive.

They are often deep-rooted patterns that come to the surface in your interactions with the people around you. What may help you is to use this as an opportunity to explore and examine these patterns.

Not because it is particularly enjoyable to dig into something that is painful. You probably don't want to explore this at all and hope it will go away on its own. Unfortunately, that would only be a temporary solution.

Why is exploring the pattern a more permanent solution?

Because you want to heal the old wound to prevent that this pattern keeps repeating itself with the people you love.

Because these patterns damage your relationships and can even lead to estrangement from your loved ones.

Or because you realize that if you don't take responsibility for this pattern you will pass it on to your own children.

The challenge is to take ownership for these patterns and build sustainable and loving relationships with a heart-centred connection. With some people this will be easy, and with others it might be challenging. But challenging relationships can give you valuable life lessons that help you grow and evolve. The true treasure lies in being able to find a meaningful connection, even when there are differences and vulnerabilities, whether it is in a love relationship, with your parents, children, coworkers, friends or with your neighbours.

~Journaling exercise Finding Wisdom in Relationships~

This exercise will help you explore a situation where someone 'pushed your button'. When you bring your conscious attention to this situation you can find meaningful insights.

If that sounds helpful to you, I invite you to do this exercise.

A. Preparation

- See if you can find 30 minutes of solitude where you will not be disturbed.
- Find a nice pen to write with and enough paper / a notebook.

- Sit down in an active position and make yourself comfortable with some nice tea, light a candle and see this exercise as a gift of attention to yourself.
- Take your time to write down what comes up for you with each question. If nothing comes up for one of them, you can skip that one and continue to the next question.
- Take some time before, during and after the exercise to take 3 deep and full breaths.
- Are you ready?

B. Let's get started

- Think about that one person that brings up intense feelings that you can't get out of your head.
- Think about the specific situation, or the last time you saw or spoke to each other. Be specific, like: where were you, what was the space and setting like? Were there other people around? What were you doing? What happened? What did you talk about?
- Then write down.....
 1. What was the nerve that was touched (with you and/or the other)?
 2. Which reactions were triggered in this situation? E.g. defensiveness, attacking, shutting down, trying to ignore it, keeping it in, becoming hypervigilant?
 3. What did the other person say that was difficult for you?
 4. What were the thoughts that kept coming up about that person?
 5. Which feelings or emotions came up in this situation? Did you feel angry, scared, sad, etc.?
 6. Did you notice that your mood changed? Think about a heaviness, emptiness, feeling deflated, restless or wobbly etc.?
 7. Notice the physical sensations that come up now that you think about this person or situation. For example, are you

feeling a tension, pain, temperature, movement or tingling sensation?

8. Does this reaction remind you of past events? It often brings up older situations that you haven't processed yet. Do you recognize this reaction from your upbringing and from what you have copied from your parents/caregivers?
9. What else wants to be expressed? Let your pen flow freely over the paper.

c. Wrap-up

Once you have written all of this down for yourself

- Let go of your pen
- Let go of the situation
- Close your eyes
- Take 3 deep and full breaths, where you take space in chest, diaphragm and belly) with each breath.
- Notice and feel what the exercise has stirred up for you (if nothing comes up that is totally okay).
- If you have some new insights you would like to write down, feel free to do so.

And lastly, you can write down

- What are the qualities you appreciate in this person? (If this feels too sensitive or too soon, leave this question for a later time).
- Close off the exercise. You can do this by getting up, doing a full-body shake, moving or stretching. It is important to close off the exercise so you can continue with your day.
- Ask yourself what feels right. Perhaps you want to go for a walk or take a hot shower to literally wash yourself clean off the exercise.

You can repeat this exercise with any situation and relationship in your life where things got (temporarily or more frequently) entangled. The more often you reflect on your own patterns, the less baggage you carry with you and the healthier your relationships will be.

I am curious to know your experience with this exercise, and if you notice a difference in your relationship over time.

Would you like a deeper understanding of your relationships? In a 1-on-1 session I will help you gain insights into your patterns and move towards loving connections in your relationships.

Warm regards,

Jessica Versluijs

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