

Let The Healing Begin - Within

by Richard E. Simmons, M.D.



Wayne Dyer, a popular psychologist, once said that when you squeeze an orange, the only juice you get is orange juice. The same is true for human behavior. When Jesus was squeezed, He was so full of love for His tormentors that he asked God to

forgive them. So the question before us is "How do you respond in a stressful situation, when someone is angry with you or is critical of you?"

My theory is that every one of us should continually be aware of the kind of vibrations we radiate not only in our professional roles, but also in our personal lives. A Greek philosopher once said "the unexamined life is not worth living." We are all aware of the biblical saying "love your neighbor as yourself."

We all give love to others in proportion to the love we have for ourselves. Mother Teresa was well aware of this when she required each of the nuns who worked long hours in her hospitals to set aside one hour per day for personal use. Do we give ourselves the same luxury? We are all on a journey of healing which ends only when our physical body has reached the end of its earthly journey.

In his book *Self-Esteem*, Mathew McKay, Ph.D., states "the essence of self-esteem is compassion for yourself." You forgive yourself for mistakes (lessons you needed to learn). You have reasonable expectations of yourself. You set attainable goals. You see yourself as basically good.

Let's take an assessment of how you go through life. It is called The Coopersmith Inventory from the University of California at Davis.

Read each sentence and then place an X under the appropriate column:

Like Me Unlike Me

01. Things usually don't bother me.
02. I find it very hard to talk in front of a group.
03. There are lots of things about myself I'd change if I could.
04. I can make up my mind without too much trouble.
05. I'm a lot of fun to be with.
06. I get upset easily at home.
07. It takes me a long time to get used to anything new.
08. I'm popular with persons of my own age.
09. My family usually considers my feelings.
10. I give in very easily.
11. My family expects too much of me.
12. It's pretty tough to be me.
13. Things are all mixed up in my life.
14. People usually follow my ideas.
15. I have a low opinion of myself.
16. There are many times when I would like to leave home.
17. I often feel upset with my work.

Like Me Unlike Me (Continued)

18. I'm not as nice looking as most people.
19. If I have something to say, I usually say it.
20. My family understands me.
21. Most people are better liked than me.
22. I usually feel as if my family is pushing me.
23. I often get discouraged with what I'm doing.
24. I often wish I were someone else.
25. I can't be depended on.

It is fairly easy to score with 4 points for each positive answer. The maximum score would be 100 for those with the highest self-esteem.

So now that you have had a chance to look at yourself and realize there may be some baggage you are carrying around that is not useful personally or professionally, what can you do about it?

Start by accepting yourself right now just as you are. If you have a hard time with this idea then tell your best friend or join a small group where you can be heard and accepted even if you don't at the moment accept yourself. If others can love you with your faults, it becomes easier for you to love yourself.

Please don't fall into the trap of blaming your genes or the rough environment you had to endure as a small child. Blaming others for your issues only locks in the unhealthy baggage most of us carry around. It can be helpful to look at how you got into this predicament but only if you are willing to heal the hurts.

The most therapeutic program the author has experienced is the Hoffman Quadrinity Process. More information is available from a very spiritual colleague Peter Kolassa at 1-800-741-3449.

Dr. McKay's book mentioned above is another helpful guide for increasing your self-esteem and compassion for yourself. It is really a very useful guide for therapists who are trying to help their clients.

We often hear about how stressful life can be. Physiologically stress is a very useful tool for the human body since it fires up our sympathetic nervous system. We need this for

our protection as in the fight or flight response. Unfortunately prolonged stress causes our body to develop various types of physical illnesses. We all need to overcome this with its counterpart, the parasympathetic system which calms us down, as with meditation or prayer.

One of my favorite tools I use with my patients is the formula $E + R = O$. The E stands for event, the R for response and O the outcome. For example: a coworker says something unkind about you (the event). If your response is out of fear rather than love then you will retaliate in kind. The outcome is thus anger and a separation. But guess what? The outcome is not dependant on the event (life's stressors) but on your response to the event. If you responded to the event with love and tried to understand why the other person would say such things the outcome could be more understanding and love between the two of you.

You have probably heard the expression, happiness is an inside job. It is so easy in our culture to see things, events, or other persons as being responsible for our good feelings. If your happiness rests on only one or two items, and something goes wrong with one then you will immediately feel threatened and fearful. We all need at least four things in our lives that make us happy. If you are deficient in this regard, then open up some new avenues so that your life becomes more balanced. Look at how often when a marriage turns sour one or both partners can be devastated. Life is going to throw us curveballs to test us and to teach us.

One of my favorite psychiatrists is Brian Weiss, whose book *Many Lives, Many Masters* opened my eyes as to the purpose of our soul. I have alluded to the idea of how we are all on a spiritual journey temporarily housed in a

physical body. Life throws us many challenges in order that we might become more loving and spiritual. Some benefit from such challenges, others succumb and develop emotional and or physical problems as a result. Many patients with cancer have stated that their disease was a wake up call to make much needed changes in their lives. They are grateful for the learning and healing this ordeal provided.

The final thought has to do with learning to love yourself and elevating your self-esteem. It may be helpful to read books such as the ones mentioned above, but this alone will not erase many of our deeper and more life affecting behaviors. My observations of people who have undertaken this healing journey is that they are more successful when undergoing emotional release through an experiential process. Trying to go it alone does not work very well. We need other people in our lives who want to travel along the same road. Join a talk it over or sharing group. For this concept to work the group must adhere to certain rules, such as strict confidentiality, total honesty, acceptance--not judgment--and commitment to the group as an important priority. The group will fail if we try to be therapists to one another. No one has all the answers to your life so pontification is just an ego trip not helpful for another person's growth.

If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always gotten. Change is good. Embrace it. Find new paths for yourself so that your life may be increasingly meaningful and satisfying. We can shed the baggage which was thrust upon us when we were helpless little beings. Stop being a victim of the past and make your life one you feel blessed to have lived..

Not Such a Silly Goose

When you see geese heading south for the winter... flying along in V formation... you might consider as to why they fly that way.

As each bird flaps its wings, it creates an uplift for the bird immediately following.

By flying a V formation, the whole flock adds at least 71 percent greater flying range than if each bird flew on its own.

People who share a sense of community can get where they are going more quickly and easily because they are traveling on the thrust of one another.

When a goose falls out of formation it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to go it alone, and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird in front.

If we have as much sense as the goose, we will stay in formation with those who go in the same way we are.

When the head goose gets tired it rotates back in the V, and another goose flies point.

It is sensible to take turns doing demanding jobs...with people or geese.

Geese honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up the speed. What do we say when we honk from behind?

Finally... and this is important...when a goose gets sick, or is wounded by gunshots and falls out of formation, two other geese fall out with the goose and follow it down to lend help and protect. They stay with the wounded goose until it can fly or until it dies; and only then do they launch out on their own, or with another formation to catch up with their group.

If we have the sense of a goose we too will stand by each other.