



Our "Wise I" and "Inner Orphans"

One of the greatest awakenings I've ever had was realizing that there was an "inner child" within me who has never grown up: left behind, stuck in my past, and able to pull me back there with her without warning, not realizing that we don't live in my mother's house any more.

It was almost as huge a revelation when I realized that there wasn't just one inner child in here; I have an entire orphanage. Each one represents an experience that I didn't have the resources to fully process at the time it happened that never got tended to afterwards, either, quite literally leaving a part of me (the neural network of that experience) still stuck in that old moment, waiting to get the support it needs to return to wholeness and connection with the rest of me.

Some of my inner orphans are very young, some of them are teenagers, and there are even a few young adult women in there.

Some of these parts of me are defended, protective, and angry. Some parts are dependent and grasping. Some are frozen, terrified, helpless. All of them are disconnected from the present moment and from the wholeness of me and my experience in an essential way. And when I'm perceiving, understanding, choosing, speaking, or acting through the eyes of any of these "disconnected parts" I suffer, and I tend to pass my suffering on to others (often stimulating their inner orphans).

But there is also a wholeness in me that is not diminished in any way by any of these "disconnected parts" or the intensity of some of their distress, that is eternally and irrevocably complete, grounded, authentic, integrated, and connected to what is life-giving. This "Wise I" is both healthily separate from other people and - as a result - that is also available for present, openhearted authentic connection with others.

I have all of these "I's" inside me, and you do, too.

My "Wise I" is the "real me," and when I am connected to it I feel peaceful, calm, empowered, and safe -- ***regardless of circumstances.*** (For more on this, check out our Healthy Boundaries blog.)

When a part of me that's not my "Wise I" is in the driver's seat of my life, I notice it inevitably crashes into something or drives us off a cliff, causing even more suffering for me and for those around me.

Simply noticing which part of me is "driving the bus" of my perceptions, words, and actions is astonishingly empowering.

When I realize that my "Wise I" isn't what's driving the bus of my life in a particular moment, the most helpful thing I've found to do is to simply ***stop and pause from whatever I'm thinking, saying, or doing.*** I don't want to make any choices from those disconnected places. ***In that moment, the only thing that matters is holding those disconnected parts with compassion, and compassionately grounding in my "Wise I."***

Until I can find my way back to my own "Wise I," I also avoid engaging with people I'm having an upset with (unless I can count on them to hang on to their own "Wise I"); one of us needs to be able to hold a compassionate, present space or more suffering inevitably gets created. I also do my best to let them know ***in advance*** that this is my practice, so they understand that my withdrawal is a very intentional, caring expression of my commitment to the quality of our connection and to how I Am in our relationship, rather than an abandonment of them or our a dismissal of our connection.

I have a list of practices and strategies that help me drop back into my "Wise I" when I lose this self-connection, and I keep them written down and close by. I pull them out whenever I need a little help to return to my "Wise I." If necessary, sometimes I put them up on my wall or on the edge of my computer screen so they're there all the time, calling me back to my Self.

Finally I have a set of practices and strategies that I use daily to continually help me strengthen my Wise I so that I can stay connected with and living from this part of me as much of each day as possible, and so my capacity to stay connected to this part of me when things get bumpy continues to strengthen. For example, throughout my day, I check in with myself: where am I, right now? Am I grounded in my Wise I or am I a little "off"? Each time I feel into "where am I?," I'm loving myself, teaching myself what really matters, and reorienting myself towards my Wise I.

Each time I even just turn my attention towards it, I strengthen my capacity to stay connected to my "Wise I." And each time I move myself back into that whole, grounded, authentic place, I strengthen my unconscious sense that this is what "home" feels like.

Thrillingly, the integration of NVC with the latest breakthroughs in neuroscience/interpersonal neurobiology and trauma treatment provides a rigorous scientific explanation of what our "Wise I" and our "child parts/inner orphans" are. These parts of us are real neurologically, and science understands now that our "orphaned" parts can actually be restored to wholeness (sometimes in a single "integrated" session, when we can access the felt sense of our unmet needs).

Our own Susan Skye and Sarah Peyton are pioneers in this work, and I can't say enough about the profound effectiveness this integrated work has for creating transformational healing. (To learn more, inquire at newdepthsjourney@gmail.com.) After 40 years of dedicated inner work, the relief I've personally experienced after just one "Depth Reintegration" session has been profound, leaving me with a distinctly expanded, effortless, lasting sense of calm, peace, security, and authentic empowerment.

Profound healing is possible, and it is available to us through our "Wise I" and reconnecting with and reintegrating our disconnected parts -- our "inner orphans."

What are your experiences of profound healing through connecting your "Wise I" and your "inner orphans"? Please share them via email or at this blog post (www.rosecitynvc.org/our-wise-i) if you'd enjoy making a difference by sharing your journey with your NVC community.

And, here's to wrapping our compassionate, "Wise I" arms around all of our inner orphans.

Blessings on us all,

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