

"Child Development"

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I consistently encounter an issue with regard to individuals "discovering" religion and discharging their guilt and shame through religious conversion, where a significant religious symbol becomes the carrier of that guilt and shame. This is problematic because in my experience and observation;

1. The lack of skilled instruction and pastoral support in dealing with core dysfunctional psychosocial issues
2. The ambiguity of religious texts
3. Unprocessed previous antisocial and criminal cognitive distortions

Result in crippled "in-prison" religious communities, where dysfunctional interpersonal relationships and roles are recapitulated. This discharge serves as a bypass and does not address the pathology of the behavior which resulted in the guilt and shame and this "religiosity" becomes another form of defense of addictive/criminal thinking instead of addressing the contributing factors of addictive/criminal thinking. This led to the articulation of the following concept which I had utilized but not assembled in words.

Every person who is actively engaged and participating in their recovery from substance abuse must consider themselves "parents" of their inner child of recovery. Coming to this realization was very enlightening and empowering. Framing the responsibilities and duties of recovery within a parental context really emphasized the importance of my focused and sustained attention. As an adult I have to be the best parent my inner kid could ever ask for, because "our" lives depend on it. "We" have overcome our previous disorganized attachment and I will provide all the necessary love, attention, and emotional support to develop and earn a new secure attachment with my "kid". I will protect him, nurture him, and teach him.

My inner child has the following very special needs:

1. He has the disease of addiction.

Which is defined as; a primary, chronic disease of brain reward, motivation, memory and related circuitry. Dysfunction in these circuits leads to characteristic biological psychological, social and spiritual manifestations. This is reflected in an individual pathologically pursuing reward and/or relief by substance use or other behaviors. Addiction is characterized by inability to consistently abstain, impairment in behavioral control craving, diminished recognition of significant problems with one's behaviors and interpersonal relationships, and a dysfunctional emotional response. Like other chronic diseases, addiction often involves cycles of relapse and remission. Without treatment or engagement in recovery activities, addiction is progressive and can result in disability or premature death. (American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) 2011)

2. He suffered years of emotional and physical abuse at the hands of others and himself.
3. He lacked basic emotional coping skills.
4. He lacked basic social skills.
5. He was undereducated.
6. He had little experience serving or being considerate of others.
7. He had little experience at living productively and prosocially among others.

This meant I was responsible for taking the necessary steps to teach my child how to live with and overcome these factors. Being "reborn" came with huge responsibilities and I could not rest on the "gift" of divine forgiveness, which was only a starting point. This meant learning, practicing and living in a manner that nurtured my inner child and promoted his growth.

1. I was responsible for educating my child regarding the particulars of his disease.
2. I was responsible for seeking the necessary help to address my child's emotional wounds, which meant seeking the assistance of a mental health professional.
3. I was responsible for providing my child with the necessary tools to deal with life on life's terms. That meant ensuring my child attended groups and obtained information which taught those skills (emotional and social life skills).
4. I was responsible for ensuring my child "practiced" his lessons and did his homework so that he became skilled at using those tools.
5. I was responsible for ensuring that my child sought the necessary academic and vocation training that he did not receive during his addiction.
6. I was responsible for ensuring that my child was surrounded by people who were actively seeking to live productive lives.
7. I was responsible for ensuring that my child was provided opportunities to be responsible and engage in service to others.

The bottom line:

I was and am responsible for my recovery.