

Transcending Real and Imaginary Abuse in the Now



Before we attempt to solve the endless philosophical issues of the world, we must have some clarity about the nature of life in this relative dimension. While there is plenty of beauty in life, it is also challenging and shocking on many levels. Seeing life as it really is may surprise and alarm some, but this is only because such people live in imaginary worlds. Because of their fear of reality, they refuse to look life in the face, choosing instead to live in a dream. This is a condition shared by many pseudo-spiritual people who prefer to idealize the world rather than to come out of their minds and see reality.

We must have a better perspective of this world to be able to place abuse in its proper context. It is impossible to live in the physical realm and not experience pain. Being hurt is not an isolated event just caused by bad luck or unfortunate circumstances. When a volcano or an earthquake destroys a city, it is called an act of god or *force majeure*, but when one human — intentionally or otherwise — hurts another, it is called abuse.

It is not necessary to explain how things are through a concept of god or otherwise; things just are the way they are, and our perception and interpretation of them changes as we change our relationship with life. We cannot change the nature of life, but we can discover a higher life through attaining purity and realizing our light. From the perspective of such higher life, one experienced from pure subjectivity, our understanding and experience of relative life on the physical plane is also uplifted to a higher level of harmony and beauty. And, although this higher level neither means that suffering in the world stops, nor that there is an end to compassion for those who are suffering, it does mean that we are no longer lost emotionally in it and that we can appreciate such suffering may have the potential of offering valuable transformative lessons for those most affected.

Abuse and the Nature of Life

Some psychological issues and suffering can be the outcome of past abuse. This may have occurred in different ways, from having experienced physical or psychological violence, to sexual abuse as a minor, or to milder problems, such as not having received proper care or emotional nourishment and love. For a child, not receiving love is experienced as a kind of violence. When a sensitive soul incarnates into this terrifying reality, not receiving adequate support from parents and one's environment can leave deep scars on the heart. But who is really at fault in cases like this? How can many parents, who may themselves be in pain and struggling to cope with this same reality, be capable of offering adequate love and support to a child?

Indeed, the deepest yearnings of the soul often remain unanswered in this realm of forgetfulness and suffering. In cases of more acute expressions of abuse, such as psychological, sexual or physical violations, whether in childhood or later, while never justified, they may often result in important lessons for each person involved.

The nature of the physical dimension is such that unkindness, and even cruelty, may often be experienced. Cruelty among animals is common. When an animal is crippled, even those of its own kind will tend to abuse it physically and even kill it. Little compassion is shown in the animal kingdom to those who are unfit, handicapped or even relatively weak. The treatment of humans by other humans is not much different. We have just been trained to respect what is deemed to be socially acceptable morality and to control our basic instincts, but without great success.

Humanity is only civilized on its surface. This was something Freud prophetically alluded to many times. He had a deep mistrust of humanity and a rather pessimistic impression of our ability to transcend our primitive nature. It was no coincidence that, soon after he voiced these views, the Second World War commenced and one of the most 'civilized' nations of the world succumbed to the ideology of brute power and domination by the fittest.

It is not just one nation or race that is crueler than another: all are cruel and barbarous. Civilization and material abundance (for some) is no more than an illusion masking our barbarian nature and deluding us into temporarily forgetting the animal inside. Even a wolf, when satiated, can appear to be harmless, and even playful, until his hunger returns. The way to test the level of civilization of an average human is to take away his basic means of survival: his food, shelter and security. Then we are reminded that people are not what they appear to be, and that the integrity of only very few can be relied upon.

Until the inner darkness is transformed, the savage tendencies of the psyche are only biding their time for a suitable moment for them to emerge from the dark cave of the unconscious. No one is purely good — people are both good and bad and, unless they begin to live from their souls, their negative side has the potential to hurt others.

Recollecting Memories to Heal the Past

We cannot fully trust our memories, because memories are naturally fragmented. Sometimes when we look back at our past, we have the strange feeling that what we are seeing is someone else's story, because much of it seems so disconnected and unreal in comparison to who we are now. In fact, we cannot even be certain that our memories are our own. For instance, it has been said that, upon awakening, Buddha saw all of his previous incarnations. But did this really happen or did he just imagine it? Perhaps he tapped into a collective memory of humanity, or 'remembered' what he believed to be true based on his pre-conditioned notions about reincarnation and reality. We are constantly filling the gaps in memory with imagination, to the point where we not only remember imagined pasts, but we also imagine that we remember them.

There is a concept of 'repressed memory' in psychology. A more scientific term for it is 'dissociative amnesia'. It is a disorder characterized by retrospectively reported gaps in memory. These gaps involve an inability to recall personal information, usually of a traumatic or stressful nature. In certain therapeutic circles it is thought that bringing such repressed memories back to the conscious mind will have a healing effect. But we need to be careful in the way we recall the past, as what we are remembering may not be fully real. What if we are actually projecting our present suffering into our past? This could result not only in a false personal history, but also an increase in our present suffering, providing a means not to heal but to prolong it.

Therapists may even influence their clients by imposing their own belief systems on them, based on their therapeutic models. This can result in a distorted recollection of the part on the part of the client. Using the power of suggestion, a therapist could even retrieve false memories from his or her client and convince that person that they were genuine. As an example of this, there was an extreme case in which a therapist convinced a large number of her clients that they had been sexually abused. However, after the facts had been verified, it became clear that the clients involved had not been abused after all. This raises serious concerns and questions about the nature and reliability of memory as a means for healing. Of course, memory retrieval is often real and can promote healing, but it is important to be cautious in these matters.

The Past is not the Way to Heal the Present

Another practice, directly tied to the idea of repressed memory retrieval, is that of regressing people back to their childhoods. In this, a therapist, either in a group session or in one-to-one therapy, helps people to remember their childhood and, in particular, their relationships with their fathers and mothers. In such sessions people begin to re-experience all kinds of things, both real and imaginary, from the past, usually focusing on the negative. As innocent and vulnerable children, we might not have been capable of understanding that our parents may have been wrong when they mistreated us, or we

might not have been able to express fully what we were feeling. As a consequence, our emotional frustration will almost certainly have been repressed.

The theory is that the accumulation of these repressed emotions and unresolved issues with parents has a detrimental effect on our psychological health and integrity and we carry this with us into our adulthood, when we take charge of our lives. According to this therapy, when we are regressed back into our childhood and are able to experience and express our repressed pain and anger fully, we can finally release and become free of them. However, the questions still remain as to whether what we remembered was real or imagined, and whether or not we projected a false past into our background based on the psychological issues we have in the present.

A therapist may well have been trained and conditioned to interpret our psychological reality in specific ways, and this may cause them to project preconceived 'templates' on to their clients. These templates may at times actually align with the reality of the client's situation and lead to positive results. However, they may not be aligned, and this can result in certain distortions of the clients memories and emotions, based on imagination rather than reality. For instance, after regressing a client back into childhood, the therapist may expect the client to be very angry with his or her father or mother. The client may then imagine and create an artificial anger to support the therapist's expectations, or even reconstruct a memory of abuse through his or her subtle power of suggestion. The client might then create a virtual reality of his childhood, including the imagined anger, which boils into rage, and then again start intensive therapy to heal these perceived wounds.

The question raised is this: what is this person healing? His or her past trauma or just the memory of them? In many cases, what is being healed is neither the past nor the memory, but how we respond in the present to the (real or imagined) memory of being wounded in the past.

The overall point is, it is highly questionable whether we actually heal anything by remembering our past pain. In many cases, our past has already been healed and let go of, and by revisiting it again as adults, we reactivate it, re-opening a wound that had long been closed. We then need to heal and forget this past all over again, so that we can get on with our real life in the present. Of course, if a person is completely emotionally blocked or frozen because of repressing past pain, becoming aware of it is an important element of healing. But what one is healing is not the past, but who one is in the present. For that healing to work one has to take responsibility for one's present self instead of remaining a victim of the past.

Digging for, and wallowing in, traumatic memories seems not to solve anything. It is actually easier to remember traumatic events than insignificant ones, as they are imprinted more deeply on the psyche. And even if one has forgotten a past trauma, perhaps this is how it should be: the healthy way our psychosomatic organism seals a hurtful memory from the conscious mind. Remembering is not always positive.

Many Facets of Abuse

It is common to associate the idea of abuse with childhood sexual abuse, but of course it can also relate to physical abuse or having parents with addictions and so forth. All of this is very traumatic and damaging to a young psyche. Because sexuality is invariably linked with shame, that shame also magnifies the trauma of sexual abuse. Once the element of shame is removed, it is much easier to transform and transcend the wound that has been made. The same principle applies to the trauma of being raped or violated at a more mature age. Such violence is indeed terrible and inexcusable and, in addition to causing physical trauma, results in psychological and emotional damage.

It is important to keep in mind that many of our emotional reactions to abuse are filtered by the social super-ego, through which we innately perceive our situation through the eyes of others. For instance, one wonders what would happen if we could take the feelings of shame, negative self-image and social judgment out of the equation? In some societies a woman may even take her own life out of the shame of being raped. This is an example of how super-ego that exacerbates abuse. If the pain of abuse were confronted in a more integral way, without social and religious judgments, perhaps it would not leave a permanent scar on the psyche, and not impact the subsequent life of the person involved so negatively.

It is relatively common that a person who has been violated sexually turns their sexuality off, has a distrust of others and is repulsed by sexual contact. But these feelings following such an experience can be healed and transcended if one has the courage to bring conscious awareness to one's feelings, activate one's inner integrity, and empowers oneself in one's present life.

Irrespective of whether we speak of sexual abuse or any other kind of abuse, it is this living through the past and refusing to access the power within that causes one to become a mere victim, rather than living in the now and into the future. We might even say that in all cases of abuse, sexual or otherwise, what truly needs to be healed is the shame and the feeling that one is a victim – any remaining pain needs to be integrated as the material our soul uses to transcend the dimension of illusion.

To transform, we must change our relationship with the painful experiences and information from the past that we have stored in our bodies and subconscious minds. We must bring gentleness, deep relaxation, and true self-love into our bodies and emotions. Letting go of shame, victim consciousness, self-pity, self-hate and anger is just the basic requirement to begin to nurture a conscious and loving relationship with our own self. All such negative tendencies are nothing more than burdens we carry which serve no good; they just drain us of our power and light.

Therapy of the Now

Since we cannot change the past, the highest healing possible is forgiveness of it, including forgiving those who caused us pain and forgiving ourselves for any blame we may have assumed and for how we may have let such past memories limit our life.

To truly heal, we must first be able to feel, and then feel our feelings totally in each meaningful moment of our life. Whatever pain we carry in our being from the past will most certainly be present in the background of our current emotional state. It is by healing our pain in the now that we heal the past, not the reverse.

Also, it must be borne in mind that not all pain from the past is meant to be healed. In fact, busying ourselves healing it is what causes it to become real in our present. Some pain simply needs to be integrated, or assimilated, into our complete self. Furthermore, there are many experiences of suffering that are no longer linked to our present, other than as wisps of memory. If we experienced a headache yesterday, do we need to keep healing it? The pain is already gone, and we are ready to let it go (if we have not done so already) even if our subconscious still has a memory of it.

Of course, who we are in the physical realm is influenced by the totality of our past, and some of the tendencies we have need to be transformed and realigned with our soul.

When a child is not given the right tools to develop his individuality and self-confidence, he will most likely lack self-assurance and an ability to take control of his life when he reaches maturity.

Becoming aware of the causes and influences underlying our personality makeup can be useful for our further development. But this should not be confused with healing the past. We are only healing the now. We are healing disharmony from the past that still influences our experience of who we are now. Such past influences are entrenched in our present psychological structure, meaning they are not in the past – they are integral to our present self and should serve as constructive material for transformation.

When healing sexual abuse, there has to be a clear intention of arriving at inner harmony and of being able to embrace one's physical and emotional body fully. If a woman has closed herself down sexually because of trauma, she should work with it instead of letting the trauma continue to dominate her and block her from opening. She can do such work through dissolving her fear, resentment, and shame, while also guarding herself from projecting her past experiences into her present relationship. Just as she needs to be open to her soul and inner trust, she also needs to be open to the soul of her partner. Such healing usually also requires a loving sexual connection, too, because part of the healing has to do with the physical body itself. For this to happen, she first needs to be at peace with her own body. In particular, work on the emotional power center in the solar plexus is necessary.

Spiritual awakening of the heart and of being, together with giving birth to pure emotional me, is the most powerful means through which to create the foundation of healing and reach freedom from a negative past.

Self-responsibility and Self-love

To be an adult means taking responsibility for whom one is and for one's feelings, instead of feeling a victim of others or of the whole world. Taking responsibility is a blessing, bringing with it natural gratitude for our past, even if it was a painful one. No one is truly a victim; people just have a victim mindset and belief. Even a child, despite being entirely dependent on his parents, is not a victim. From a higher perspective, the child's soul has chosen his particular life, even if it will involve great suffering.

Life is a series of opportunities to grow, transform and transcend our limitations. Without suffering, we would never enter the path; we would remain asleep and lost in dreams forever. In fact, the more lethargic and existentially passive the soul is, the more important it is she connects and works with pain and suffering. It is naïve to blame being psychologically or emotionally dysfunctional on one's childhood. Many children who have had idyllic childhoods and exemplary parents become disturbed or psychologically dysfunctional in later life. To live and evolve in this dimension, each human needs to be both realistic and strong, and this cannot be done without being tempered by the experience of suffering. A sword that is too soft or too brittle will bend or break, and hence it has to be forged in fire and cooled in water.

Sometimes the experience of pain may appear to be overwhelming, but life usually only gives us just as much pain as we can take and use for our transformation; more pain would simply be destructive, rather than grist for the mill of our spiritual evolution. While this does not justify the evil people do to other people, and although we may not be able to change the countless situations external to us in the world, we can change how we feel about and respond to what happens in our lives.

To hold on to a feeling of being abused is to choose powerlessness over empowerment, self-denial over self-love. To take responsibility is to become a co-creator of reality, rather than just remain a vulnerable pawn in the game of life. In feeling true self-love, instead of self-pity, we change the internal balance of power to where we stop being overly dependent on others and on relative circumstances.

Through finding and connecting with the force inside, we are able to bring our light to this reality rather than wait for it to be given to us from some source external to us. No matter what kind of abuse we may have experienced, to evolve as we are meant to, we must let it go through our self-love and through embodying our light. This is the true meaning of using our power, and the only way to rise above and beyond abuse.

Blessings,

Anadi

For a full glossary of terminology used, you can visit our website: www.anaditeaching/glossary