

Inner Child Workshop Outline

Richo.

We are born with inalienable emotional needs for love, safety, acceptance, freedom attention, validation of our feelings, and physical holding. **Healthy identity is based on the fulfillment of these needs.**

These needs are felt and remembered cellularly throughout our lives, though we may not always be intellectually aware of them. They were originally experienced in a survival context of dependency. **We may still feel, as adults, that our very survival is based on finding someone to fulfill our basic needs.**

But early, primal needs can be fulfilled fully only in childhood (since only then were we fully dependent). In adulthood the needs can be fulfilled only flexibly or partially, since we are interdependent and our needs are no longer connected to survival.

Whitfield. HCW

With the help of parents, other authority figures, and institutions (such as education, organized religion, politics, the media, and even psychotherapy), most of us learn to stifle or deny our Child Within. When this vital part of each of us is not nurtured and allowed freedom of expression, a false or co-dependent self emerges.

Richo

Our problem is not that as children our needs were unmet, but that as adults they are still unmourned! The hurt, bereft, betrayed Child is still inside of us, wanting to cry for what he missed and wanting thereby to let go of the pain and the stressful present neediness he feels in relationships. **In fact, neediness itself tells us nothing about how much we need from others; it tells us how much we need to grieve the irrevocably barren past and evoke our own inner sources of nurturance (**Becoming Our Own Loving Parent**)**

Recovery Survey

(Whitfield. HCW)

Never Seldom Occasionally Often Usually

1. Do you seek approval and affirmation?
2. Do you fail to recognize your accomplishments?
3. Do you fear criticism?
4. Do you overextend yourself?
5. Have you had problems with your own compulsive behavior?
6. Do you have a need for perfection?
7. Are you uneasy when your life is going smoothly? Do you continually anticipate problems?
8. Do you feel more alive in the midst of a crisis?
9. Do you care for others easily, yet find it difficult to care for yourself?
10. Do you isolate yourself from other people?
11. Do you respond with anxiety to authority figures and angry people?
12. Do you feel that individuals and society in general are taking advantage of you?
13. Do you have trouble with intimate relationships?
14. Do you attract and seek people who tend to be compulsive?
15. Do you cling to relationships because you are afraid of being alone?
16. Do you often mistrust your own feelings and the feelings of others?
17. Do you find it difficult to express your emotions?
18. Do you fear any of the following? Losing control? Your own feelings? Conflict and criticism? Being rejected or abandoned? Being a failure?
19. Is it difficult for you to relax and have fun?
20. Do you find yourself compulsively eating, working, drinking, using drugs, or seeking excitement?
21. Have you tried counseling or psychotherapy, yet still feel that "something" is wrong or missing?
22. Do you frequently feel numb, empty, or sad?
23. Is it hard for you to trust others?
24. Do you have an over-developed sense of responsibility?
25. Do you feel a lack of fulfillment in life, both personally and in your work?
26. Do you have feelings of guilt, inadequacy or low self-esteem?
27. Do you have a tendency toward having chronic fatigue, aches and pains?

28. Do you find that it is difficult to visit your parents for more than a few minutes or a few hours?
29. Are you uncertain about how to respond when people ask about your feelings?
30. Have you ever wondered if you might have been mistreated or abused, or neglected as a child?
31. Do you have difficulty asking for what you want from others?

A Hierarchy of Human Needs

(Whitfield. HCW)

1. Survival
2. Safety
3. Touching, skin contact
4. Attention
5. Mirroring and echoing
6. Guidance
7. Listening
8. Being real
9. Participating
10. Acceptance (Others are aware of, take seriously and admire the Real You, Freedom to be the Real You, Tolerance of your feelings, Validation, Respect, Belonging and Love)
11. Opportunity to grieve losses and to grow
12. Support
13. Loyalty and trust
14. Accomplishment (Mastery, "Power," "Control", Creativity, Having a sense of completion, Making a contribution)
15. Altering one's state of consciousness, transcending the ordinary
16. Sexuality
17. Enjoyment or fun
18. Freedom
19. Nurturing
20. Unconditional love (including connection with a Higher Power)

Touching

Infants deprived of touching fail to thrive and grow, even if they get proper food, nourishment and protection. Touching is most powerful by appropriate skin to skin contact.

It seems that to feel connected and cared for, we need to be hugged and touched. Virginia Satir has suggested that we need from four to twelve hugs a day as part of health maintenance

Attention

The child or individual must be attended to, i.e., given attention. The mother or other parent figure(s) must attend the infant and child so that at least its safety, security and touching are met.

Mirroring and Echoing

The next need begins to validate the infant, child or even the adult, as a felling and thinking being. Mirroring and echoing is when the mother reacts non-verbally by facial expression, posture, sounds and other movements so that it realizes that it is understood.

Our Child still has needs, and from time to time it will peep out or even bust out to try to get some of them met. At times this bursting out occurs through an unhealthy explosion or a binge of an addiction or a compulsion and may end up hurting us or hurting another.

So, how do we learn to get our needs met?

First, we can **find out** what our **needs are**.

Using the Hierarchy of Human Needs by Whitfield (above), draw two columns (see example below). Read the list starting from 1-20 and write you answers in the columns

**Did you get your need met?
met?**

(Yes or No)

**How did you get need
met?**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

The Big Four Feelings in Healing: Anger, Shame, Fear, And Joy

A word on Experiencing

When we experience, we are in that powerful part of us that we call our inner life. Our inner life includes our beliefs, thoughts, memories, feelings, body sensations, intuitions, possibilities, choices and decisions, all in the precise moment of now. So if you are experiencing any of these aspects of your inner life right now and are focused, with no distractions, you are experiencing.

A goal in healing our Child Within is to continue experiencing that inner life, which is a major part of the Child, as much as we possibly can. Eventually we can learn that when our false or adapted or co-dependent self comes in and takes over, we just notice that, and then decide whether we need that false self right now or not.

NO ONE ELSE CAN DO IT FOR US NOT EVEN OUR:

Best friend
Counselor
Therapist
Teacher
Guru
Mother
Father
Spouse
Boyfriend or girlfriend
Sponsor
Doctor
Clergy

- or any other personal

If they are safe people, they can help us, assist us and be there with us.

But we alone are responsible for our recovery now.

GUIDED MEDITATION

Sit in a comfortable straight-backed chair, or without the chair, on a pillow. When you are ready, begin to quiet your mind and to open your heart. Let your eyes close and take in a deep breath. Then slowly let the breath out. Repeat several

times. After you have begun to quiet yourself in this way, say the following two words out loud, clearly -

I AM

Then repeat them in a somewhat softer voice and keep repeating I AM until it is just a whisper. Finally, keep repeating it every few seconds, in your mind only. If distracting thoughts come in, just watch them as they come and as they go. There is no need to be in control. Just begin to let go, and keep repeating the I AM. Somewhere along your way you may notice a mild altered state of consciousness. This is usually an indication of beginning healing and moving toward Wholeness or Sanity.

This is meditation.

Afraid of Night (Whitfield. HCW)

Like the child waiting in the night
for warm hands and arms to wrap
themselves around her loneliness:
To spend herself in tears of sudden safety -
And of love.
I, too, in the dark aloneness of self unloved,
Unanchored, abandoned, and denied,
Still summon with silent child cries
the ancient hope -
The old sure magic of wantedness.

The child still lives in me
With that eager hurt of innocence bewildered
And betrayed. Ah, that painful paradox.

To sense the rescue,
And know there is none.
But driven by old dreams, pale yet powerful,
Remembrances of the soft dear touch of love,
I wait.

One waits. One always waits.
It is forgotten – that nameless need
The years have beaten from wasted heart.
But like some unshaped primeval force,
It beckons, crowds my reality,
Blunts stiff reason.

And I am grotesque with helpless wanting,
Turning my mind inwards, backwards.
Dull, too, is pain with young memories
That weaken and defy,
Submit then die.
I do not live;
I wait in such unhope.

WRITING AN UNMAILED LETTER

Writing an um-mailed letter to someone with who you have been in conflict or have any kind of unfinished business can be especially healing.

Writing an unmailed letter facilitates the Child Within's

coming out of hiding
expressing its inner life
grieving
being creative
asserting itself
getting its needs met
experiencing its life more fully

With whom in your life do you have any important unfinished business?

With whom do you have one or more important conflicts that you would like to heal?

Who has mistreated you or abused you?

Whom might you have hurt, mistreated or abused?

About whom might you be carrying a resentment?

This letter can be written to anything or anyone. Be playful even, allow your inner child to write with you. This could also be written to a pet, play thing, place, home, memento, etc.

Grieving

Unhealthy Grieving:

Don't feel. It really doesn't hurt. And if it does its not really so bad. Don't talk about your feelings. In summary, "stuff your pain"

Replace the loss immediately. Replace it with any person, place, thing behavior, experience or activity that will fill the emptiness and take away the pain.

Time will heal the loss. All you really need is enough time. And by the way, dont take too long, because things are never really as bad as they seem.

Don't talk about the loss. It makes others uncomfortable and they don't want to see you uncomfortable either.

Change the subject. If pain and grief come up, talk about something else, such as the weather or something pleasant or at least neutral.

Grieve alone. There's no reason to make others unhappy if you have to be. So don't let anyone see or her you being in pain or upset.

Watch how I handle a loss. Parents, older siblings, and similar people usually model for us several or even all of the above unhealthy ways of handling a loss, hurt or trauma.

Healthy Grieving:

Accept my grief – I need not deny or pretend

Feel – Let my feelings flow and feel them

Don't try to replace the loss immediately

Let myself be with the pain of the loss

Talk with safe people about my feelings around the loss

Don't change the subject if pain and grief come up

Take good care of myself – Nutrition, rest, moderate exercise

Involve myself in moderate work and meaningful activity

Have **fun** when it comes up. Laughter is okay

Take as much time as I need.

Interviewing Your Body

(The Inner Child Workbook, Cathryn L. Taylor. Pg. 101)

Use this exercise to help you determine where in your body the judgment, shame or overresponsibility of your young child within are stored.

1. Close your eyes. As you imagine this white light surrounding you, begin to breathe deeply, into the very center of your being. When you feel relaxed, continue.

2. Let your focus travel through your body. Pretend you are looking into a mirror at your body. Acknowledge your body as though you were saying hello to an old friend.
3. Scan your body to see where you feel tense. Ask this tension if has something to say about judgment or shame of your inner child. Be quiet and listen. Record in your mind any response you receive.
4. Think of a time you felt shame. Where in your body do you hold that? Ask your body how that experience relates to your childhood. Answer the same questions, substituting guilt for shame.
5. Go through the same process for times that you felt judgmental, judged, or overly responsible.
6. Think of a time you felt criticized. Where is that experience stored in your body? What does that experience tell you about your inner child's pain? Record in your mind any response you receive.
7. Think of a time that you felt excitement or joy. Where in your body do you carry those feelings? What does that tell you about your childhood? Answer the same questions, substituting feelings of inner peace and serenity.

As I heal my Child Within/Inner Child, I can communicate my new and healing beliefs to myself in some of the following ways -

Imagine them

Visualize myself enacting these healing beliefs

Say them with conviction

Personal Bill of Rights

(Whitfield. HCW Pg. 115)

1. I have numerous choices in my life beyond mere survival
2. I have a right to discover and know my Child Within
3. I have a right to grieve over what I didn't get that I needed or what I got that didn't need or want
4. I have a right to follow my own values and standards
5. I have a right to recognize and accept my own value system as appropriate
6. I have a right to say no to anything when I feel I am not ready, it is unsafe or violates my values
7. I have a right to dignity and respect
8. I have a right to make decisions
9. I have a right to determine and honor my own priorities
10. I have the right to have my needs and wants respected by others
11. I have the right to terminate conversations with people who make me feel put down and humiliated
12. I have the right not to be responsible for others' behavior, actions, feelings or problems
13. I have a right to make mistakes and not have to be perfect
14. I have a right to expect honesty from others
15. I have a right to all of my feelings
16. I have a right to be angry at someone I love
17. I have a right to be uniquely me, without feeling I'm not good enough
18. I have a right to feel scared and to say "I'm afraid."
19. I have the right to experience and then let go of fear, guilt and shame
20. I have a right to make decisions based on my feelings, my judgment or any reason that I chose
21. I have a right to change my mind at any time
22. I have the right to be happy
23. I have a right to stability – i.e., "roots" and stable healthy relationships of my choice
24. I have the right to my own personal space and time needs
25. There is no need to smile when I cry
26. It is OK to be relaxed, playful and frivolous
27. I have the right to be flexible and be comfortable with doing so
28. I have the right to change and grow

29. I have the right to be open to improve communication skills so that I may be understood
30. I have a right to make friends and be comfortable around people
31. I have a right to be in a non-abusive environment
32. I can be healthier than those around me
33. I can take care of myself, no matter what
34. I have the right to grieve over actual or threatened losses
35. I have the right to trust others who earn my trust
36. I have the right to forgive others and to forgive myself
37. I have the right to give and receive unconditional love

Books I used to create this workshop...

How To Be An Adult by David Richo

Healing the Child Within by Charles L. Whitfield, M.D.

A Gift To Myself by Charles L. Whitfield, M.D.

The Inner Child Workbook by Cathryn L. Taylor

Please send your
experience with this
workshop to Esau G.

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