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Encouraging Self-Discovery and Empowerment



Independence 2017

“If you can see your path laid out in front of you step by step, you know it’s not your path. Your own path you make with every step you take. That’s why it’s your path.”

Anonymous

July, 4, 2017, we celebrate Independence Day, the Spirit of ‘76, honoring a people who freed themselves from the tyranny of power and control over their lives by a foreign country. America’s great divide with Great Britain cracked open a transformational experience for our fledgling nation. We continue to fight for our freedom and independence and honor those who put their life on the line for us. Also, we need to come to grips with our personal responsibility to honor the Self.



In the realm of human relationships, “Independence Day” involves a different kind of freedom – *emotional* freedom. Perhaps you are in a relationship in which you feel like a ghost – invisible or under the power and control of someone else. What signs inform you that you have stayed *overtime* in a situation that is enslaving you? And what beliefs or fears about relationships have blindsided you, causing you to ignore the internal messages that could lead towards growth, empowerment, and change?

What about emotional slavery?

Non-violent communication expert, Marshall Rosenberg, Ph.D., defines emotional slavery as believing ourselves responsible for the feelings of others, therefore compelled to fix it. What is really happening is our own anxiety and sense of helplessness gets triggered. Continued enmeshment is the result. Your freedom closes down because you believe you have to take care of *me*. Relationships are full of hidden rules, but many of us don’t realize when we embark on a relationship journey how many unspoken expectations lie buried in our family of origin. If your relationships feel like “emotional slavery,” it’s time to find a way out of that inner prison. The cost of assuming responsibility for the feelings of others is too high — loss of self, swallowed-up, overwhelmed, smothered. It makes sense to uncover and move from whatever unconscious beliefs (abandonment, fear of losing the self) keep you from the intimacy and closeness you desire.

Bill

Bill, 45, is a case in point. He is a successful businessman who experienced one failed relationship after another. “Another one ‘bit the dust,’” he stated. His ‘transformation’ began with a crisis of “felt”

abandonment, followed by anger and depression. Then came recognition of old patterns and a realization that he was the one guilty of exerting the power and control –and overdoing it. “I was like a boulder in the middle of a river,” he told me. “My heavy presence dammed the flow of love and support in my relationships. I was a prisoner of my own anger and the control I had been taught to exert over it.” His real failure was a lack of building a relationship with himself. Instead, he sought out strong women to fill him up, holding his own emotional cards close to his chest. “Never let anyone know what’s inside you,” he said. That was his survival strategy. Though Bill’s inner growth is still a work in progress, more and more he has been able to bypass the knee-jerk way of life he’d spent his life developing and move from emotional slavery to emotional liberation and interdependency.

Just as Independence Day represents the courageous rebellion from enslavement from Great Britain when our nation was ready to break free, so, too, comes a time when we must identify and accept responsibility for our own feelings and needs. It is important to then take the necessary actions to do something about them. Then, we may celebrate our own hard-won emotional liberation and look forward to a relationship of reciprocity.

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