

CHARLYNE GELT, PH.D.

Encouraging Self-Discovery and Empowerment



Roots and Wings by Charlyne Gelt, Ph.D.

“No tree, it is said, can grow to heaven unless its roots reach down to hell.”
— C.G. Jung

An easy rule of thumb when raising children is give them roots and wings. That said, raising children is far more difficult when one has his/own childhood roots cemented in abandonment, punishment, abuse, and fear. The follow-up to such rotten roots are emotionally toxic relationships, including child rearing, that perpetuate early patterns. On the positive side, in other words, “The buck can stop here!” Such crisis may be the necessary motivation to disrupt the old pattern, develop boundaries, and learn balance instead of either/or positions.

Recently, “Jennifer,” a client of mine, called to address her three-year-old son’s aggressive behaviors which consisted of screaming, throwing things, hitting his sister and paying no attention to the rules of the household.

“What’s his problem?” she asked. “My primary New Resolution is to handle my son’s aggression problem, but I seem to be getting nowhere.”

I’d been seeing Jennifer in treatment, so I recognized her son’s aggression tapped into a whole bushel full of her own unresolved issues, leaving her feeling helpless: “I didn’t know what to do,” she said. I just want to smack him.”

That, of course, is what happened in Jennifer’s childhood when she acted up. She was smacked around by a father who ruled the home with “my way or the highway thinking.” Whenever Jennifer tried to express her own views, her thoughts and emotions, she got shut down and cut off. Over time, she gave up and has not recognized what her feelings and needs even were. Instead, she learned to read her father, but not herself. As an adult, she remained emotionally invisible, clueless as to her own need for empathy, care, and nurturing. Jennifer had no vocabulary to articulate the feelings that were alive in her. In fact, she was going through a difficult evaluation of her marriage and started to recognize her co-dependent role in that relationship.

Having been raised with punishment, fear, and a heavy hand, Jennifer (thanks to therapy), in her wisdom, chose not to repeat the same punitive style of parenting with her son. But that’s as far as she got - and it wasn’t enough. She had no empathy for herself or others, and no breathing room to make competent, well-thought-out decisions without being pressured by an inner critic as severe as her own demanding parent.

Her son never heard NO However, when it came to her small son’s aggression, Jennifer knew that her emotional repertoire was going to have to expand further so he would not repeat what had caused her so much physical and emotional pain. The problem came with the fact that Jennifer was afraid to confront and never learned to set boundaries, so asked nothing of her children. All she heard growing up was an angry NO.

Breaking old patterns learned in childhood is hard work. Her son’s aggression was a “knock at the door.” It was Jennifer’s kick in the pants, which pushed her towards growth and change. Her son’s “problem,” and her New Resolution, moved her to action mode, toward real growth and emotional development. She learned to connect

with her feelings, develop clear boundaries, more effective communication, and enrich her relationships. Here was a perfect opportunity to claim aspects of herself that had been rejected or neglected to develop.

It's typical that people wait until circumstance drags them kicking and screaming towards something new and different. Why wait until your back is up against the wall, or you are on your knees, praying for a way out of the pain of old, destructive behaviors? Whether extrinsic or intrinsically motivated, now is the time to shift from "fixing others" to "fixing" the broken parts of the self? When should one begin the journey inward from a wasteland of an inner prison. toward meaning, emotional intimacy and a strong sense of identity? The answer is NOW! **Charlyne Gelt, PH.D.**

Individual, couple, and group work is available! to assess unmet needs, to define your goals, and focus your attention on getting them met. But that can be done 356 days a year! Don't put it off. A healthy review of one's established patterns helps us work through life's emotional hurdles, assess strengths, develop new tools, explore options and set-up additional groundwork for a healthier, more enriched, balanced lifestyle.

What is your goal? What is your intention? The therapeutic goal is to bring awareness of unconscious belief systems that block change and create new tools for growth and individuation. Change your thinking; change your life!

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