

HELPING PEOPLE FIND LOVE

part 1
12/5/09

* *Love Is A Choice* (copyright 1989) was a book written by Dr. Robert Hemfelt, Dr. Frank Minirth and Dr. Paul Meier. Here is material on pages 33-38 from Chapter 3 -- Unmet Emotional Needs.

"LOVE HUNGER

"Narcissus, classic Greek legend tells us, was a very beautiful, and very aloof, young man. Lovely nymphs threw themselves at him, but he spurned them all. He never fell in love until the day he saw his reflection in a quiet pool. Instantly he became infatuated with that splendid specimen--himself.

"Completely enamored of the image, Narcissus pined at the pool-side, and of course his love went unrequited. When he spoke, there was no response. Whenever he reached down and touched the gorgeous reflection, it fled scattered by surface ripples. Eventually, he wasted away to death. . . .

"To most people today, the term *narcissism* carries some unpleasant connotations. Narcissism is an inordinate love of self, a view of life that is completely self-centered. But some professionals use the concept without that negative connotation to describe that inborn narcissistic, or love hunger, which we all possess.

"This love hunger, in contrast to narcissism, is a very positive drive, the God-given need to love and be loved that is born into every human infant. It is a legitimate need that must be met from cradle to grave. If children are deprived of love--if that primal need for love is not met--they carry the scars for life.

"Meeting the need to be loved is critically important even when babies are too young to exercise abstract understanding. You cannot merely tell a baby 'I love you' as you stroll past the crib. You must convey love in nonverbal ways the infant innately understands. Cuddling, cooing, and talking to the baby are as important as warmth and food. This is why hospitals recruit volunteers or schedule staff to simply sit and rock newborns, even preemies sprouting cobwebs of IVs. Infants can literally die if deprived of love.

"LOVE TANKS

"At the Minirth-Meier Clinic, we illustrate your love hunger by drawing a heart-shaped love tank (love tanks, as you may guess, are reservoirs for love). Imagine being a newborn child possessing a heart-shaped love tank deep inside yourself. Were the tank to have a gas gauge, it would be nudging empty at the beginning.

"Now picture above that tank two other tanks, your biological parents. Over the course of years, they fill your tank from their own tanks.

Fifteen or twenty years later, as you wean yourself from the original family and go forth to build a family of your own, your tank is pretty well filled. Now an adult, you're primed and ready to fill tanks of your own children who in turn will be able to fill the tanks of their children. Thus in a normal, functional family, love is transmitted from generation to generation, poured down from parents to children.

. . .

[A couple told a counselor at the Minirth-Meier Clinic]: " 'We've been in emotional pain for years. Our marriage is a fiasco. But we're taking care of Junior. He's the pride and joy of the family.'

"A counselor could only respond with the caution, 'I know you mean well, but Junior is in just as much pain and travail as you are.

" 'You've heard it said that when a mother carrying a fetus drinks, she drinks for two, for the baby is drinking also. True. But it doesn't end at birth. The family is, in a sense, an expanded womb. Any significant and unrelieved pain, tension, and difficulty the parents feel is imparted to the children, usually to a greater extent.'

"When Charles and Sandy Dumont experience chronic unhappiness, little Junior Dumont will surely suffer and pay.

"In order to keep the parents' tanks filled, there must be a consistently nurturing relationship between them. At the clinic, we sketch a bond between your parents' tanks. In a normal, functional family, that bond is mutual love and respect--genuine friendship, if you will, between Mom and Dad.

"In the ideal love-tank sketch, a huge heart tank hovers above the parents' and child's--God. Our love is flawed; His is perfect. Ours has limits; His does not. Ours depends upon the response we receive; He acts in our best interests whether we requite His love or not. We cannot make each other happy; He can. He is the ultimate source of nurturing. Under the best-case scenario, the parents receive His love freely and will full tanks send it freely on to the child. . .

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"So what if the parents are at odds, you say, as long as they can adequately love the child? The point is, unless they are keeping each other's tanks replenished, they *cannot* adequately pass a filled tank to their child. In fact, parental friction often engenders a particularly sad situation. Without realizing it, one or both parents may reverse the flow. To meet their own innate needs, they draw from the child's tank what little he or she has, leaving the child with less than nothing.

"If we were to coin another definition for codependency, we might say, 'It's the condition when the love tanks are running on empty'."

* On pages 43-44 from Chapter 3 -- Unmet Emotional Needs.

"THE PROBLEM OF DENIAL

"If the effects of codependency are so glaringly obvious, why bother with counseling? After all, surely the sufferer need simply identify the problem and take steps to resolve it. . . .

"There is in all this an ogre, bugaboo. Denial. Ask the average person if she/he had a happy childhood and he/she will hasten to say 'Yes!'

" 'And were your parents good to you?'

" 'They were wonderful people.'

"One of two things is going on here: (a) the person's parents really were neat people deserving of their children's praise or (b) the person had an absolutely rotten, abused childhood and his/her love tank is on empty.

"Codependents with significant unmet emotional needs are masters of denial. It comes built in. For their whole lives, these people have been living a lie--pretending, wishing, yearning that their lives were lovely when in reality they were unbearably painful emotionally and perhaps physically. They can't stop lying now. If reality sinks in, the wracking past will surface with all its open sores, its pockets of pus and filth. Codependents spent a lifetime burying that mess. Denial, therefore, becomes a major hurdle to healing. In fact, healing cannot begin until denial is dealt with properly.

"Denial cowers behind many different masks. Quite commonly pain, though not forgotten, is carefully and deliberately buried."

* On page 95 from Chapter 7 -- Denial.

"Consider the addiction cycle. The observer on the outside looking in can see clearly and say to the addict, 'Why are you doing this to yourself when the consequences are so obvious?' The answer is denial. The only way an addict (we'll say 'she' for convenience, but it operates just as powerfully with 'he') can remain in her addiction if somehow she can maintain her denial.

"Declare things better or less harmful than they really are--thus, by magical thinking, she reduces the consequences to manageable size or even to zero. If but for a short time she breaks with that denial, the addiction cycle is revealed for what it is.

"This concept is even more important for the codependent than for the dependent. The dependent is dealing with his addiction or dysfunction; the codependent must deal with both his problems and hers. 'His problem isn't as bad as it looks. It's going to get better. I myself don't have a problem.'

"Codependents growing up in a dysfunctional home very early learn how to use denial effectively."

* From pages 159-164 from Chapter 12--The Roles People Play

"Enabler

"If it weren't for the enablers, a family's dysfunction could not long exist. The tragedy is that the enablers can't grasp that fact. . .

"The roles of this final layer are the enabler's instinctive adaptations to the stressful situation, and they change as the situation changes. They are the placater, martyr, rescuer, persecutor and victim."

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Matt. 7:1 not pre-occupied with other people
 2 God will deal with you -- in a similar fashion
 to how you deal with other people
Matt. 23:3 Christ -- the Pharisees didn't practice what they
 preached
Rom. 14:10 not pre-occupied with other people
 12 everyone shall give account of himself
James 4:11-12 not pre-occupied with other people
Matt. 7:3-5 seeing your own problems

* Seeing yourself
* Seeing God's love -- forgiveness & expectations
* Repenting

Luke 18:9-14 contrast -- denial -- repentance
Job 42:1-6 now, my eyes sees you

* Helping others

Gal. 6:1 spirit of meekness
 2 be willing to help other people
 3 not vanity
 4-5 focus more on correcting yourself
Matt. 22:39 self-respect
1 Thes. 5:14 warn -- comfort -- support -- patient