

BROADENING OUR PERSPECTIVE ON HEALING FOR ADULT CHILDREN OF DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILIES

Adult children of dysfunctional families are people who've grown up in various types of difficult situations. Here are some examples, each of which would constitute a dysfunctional family: (1) the father beat the mother (2) the child was sexually abused, (3) a parent was alcoholic, (4) there was mental illness in the family, (5) a family member made a suicide attempt, or (6) the child was unwanted or emotionally neglected.

Although the initial causes of the suffering for adult children of dysfunctional families are very varied, the effects are quite similar in a number of ways. Research has shown that adult children of dysfunctional families have weaker immune systems than other people do and, as a result, may get sick more easily. They are also more likely to have difficulties in relationships, low self-esteem, difficulties at work, and so on.

On the other hand, many of the children from these families grow up to be strong and resilient. We don't all become like our parents. The fact is that some of us act more destructively than our parents did whereas others function a great deal more healthily. How well we do in our adult lives depends directly on our conscious decisions as well as on will power to stick to our path and healing.

However, it's not enough to take steps toward healing. There are a vast number of approaches available and most are either very slow or totally ineffective. The result is that many who try these methods and stick with them end up giving up on their personal growth because they come to see themselves as being hopeless.

We have to use our discernment and pick and choose what works for us - we have to be prepared to let go of methods that are ineffective for us. Keeping on going to a counselor for years because he feels nice and supportive or going to a self-help group because we don't feel alone, or going to a spiritual group because it feels right isn't enough. We have to see progress in ourselves and in our behaviour.

Using myself as an example, I grew up in a quite difficult situation. I've seen over fifty helper / healer types over time. This has helped me to figure out what works for me and what doesn't. I've also had a spiritual practice since 1969. As a helping professional and trainer with thirty three years experience, I've also tried a large number of helping methods with adult children of dysfunctional families. In addition, I've obtained feedback from many of my clients regarding their experience with other helping professionals. All of this has given me a very useful perspective regarding what works well for most people who've grown up in dysfunctional families and what doesn't.

Based on my training and experience, following are a number of recommendations for you to consider if you've grown up in a dysfunctional family.

In my view, it's very important to understand the following:

- Although self-help groups are very beneficial for many people, they can also be used as a drug by some participants: “Misery loves company, so let’s keep getting together, complain about our past, feel better temporarily, and let’s not make any changes in our consciousness or behaviour”. Check your motivation - are you unconsciously using your support group to avoid change.
- If you see a helper and there’s no progress within two sessions, do something else
- Helping professionals who focus on helping you to just vent feelings or see things differently or simply help to improve your self-esteem will almost certainly not be helpful for adult children of dysfunctional families. Traditional methods of therapy overall tend not to be helpful for people who’ve gone through very painful difficulties during their childhood. Rather than dig around in our basement for a long time to try to get out of our hole, we need to take a higher perspective and heal or rebalance from there.
- We tend to forget what’s worked for us in the past, especially when we’re in difficulty. Review what worked in your past regarding difficulties similar to the ones you’re facing now and try doing it again. It may well be helpful again.
- Your “over-sensitivity” is not a problem but a gift. Being very sensitive can result in many difficulties. However, it is an invaluable gift for immense spiritual advancement if we learn how to protect ourselves from negative energy from outside of us and heal our own stuff.
- People who experienced abuse or neglect need to work consistently on grounding and on connecting with their heart.
- Victim consciousness and poverty consciousness are of the ego – they’re part of the hole that we dig for ourselves. We need to learn to let go of that.
- We need to keep surrendering our ego and connect with what many self-help groups call our Higher Power
- Denial and addictions are part of the problem. Take ownership for your imperfections and your pain, and then work on them.

Although there are a variety of ways of healing that are quite useful for many adult children of dysfunctional families, following are some ground-breaking methods that I’ve found to be very effective in healing many of these people very quickly:

1. Imagine that rose / pink light is all around your body and protects you. It should be a layer of half an inch to two inches – up to 15 centimeters. (You probably won’t feel anything from that exercise but it will protect you from negativity from the outside)
2. Imagine that you’re like an oak tree, with roots going deep into the earth. Anchor the roots to a big rock deep in the earth. Imagine that energy comes up from the earth and into your legs and makes them more powerful. Send this energy to the base of your spine and feel that as power. Spread it throughout your body.
3. Imagine light coming down from the universe through the crown of your head and turns into a violet flame which burns away shame that we carry around our body. Focus on the first layer of your aura – half an inch to two inches thick, or 15 centimeters.
4. Have light go in from above through the crown of your head and then into each and every cell in your body. Imagine the energy that comes in is very nurturing and healing. You could think of it as being goddess energy if that feels right for you.
5. If you believe in God, ask for help. Pray. Surrender your suffering to God. Ask that not only your pain but also your ego be surrendered to God.
6. When you have negative thoughts, say to yourself – this is not me, not mine. Think instead that, in your essence, you have Christ consciousness, Buddha nature, or Krishna consciousness.

If these methods don't work for you, I recommend that you do what has worked best for you. If the methods recommended here do work for you, keep working on them. Use only the ones that fit for you and adjust them in a way that serves you best.

If you're interested in learning more healing methods from us, we offer workshops online. Go to www.dynamicharmony.com for more info.

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