

LOOKING THROUGH THE MIRROR
An Inner Journey to Freedom from Childhood Abuse

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CheckPoint
Press

2nd Edition published 2009 by Checkpoint Press

ISBN 978-1-906628-05-5

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Checkpoint Press
Dooagh, Achill Island, Westport, Co Mayo, Rep. Of Ireland
www.checkpointpress.com

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At specific points in our emotional and mental development we can change our sense of self... if only we could travel back there to do so. And on this journey anything is possible, for we take with us our adult wisdom and propel ourselves through time; through childlike eyes we see again the pain and find at last its true perspective. As our awareness shifts once more there gleams the gateway to our future, where past conditioning melts in the morning sun... where child and adult become as one... clear vision... the self in love. For in order to free ourselves of the past we must first understand it. ♥

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book holds the keys to your own inner journey. Only move into each next chapter as it feels right and when you are ready to encompass new shifts in your awareness -always allowing yourself the time between for nurture, the space within for healing to take place. Find yourself a notebook ready for the workshop sections and to record parts of your own journey as you wish for later reference, this will help you enormously as you come to understand yourself at a very deep level. Most chapters end with a meditation. Why not record them with your own voice so that you can listen to them with ease? If you can't it does not matter, just take them slowly –they've all been carefully put together to gently penetrate within in varying degrees throughout the book- take your time and repeat as necessary before continuing onto the next. These meditations form a strong component in the self-healing process. Working with them will greatly aid emotional release as your self-love grows within.

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CHAPTER 1

Acknowledging Within

“And the call from our subconscious comes... yearning... hoping for the inner peace and sanctuary of self-love and acceptance to grow, at last, inside. That all confusion may find clarity... all hurt and pain find, at last, its absolution.”

It is not easy to acknowledge abuse in our past. It is not easy to make the decision to help ourselves when we know that the journey will be difficult. It is a decision made with pure strength of will and one of which we should all be so proud.

To choose to conquer all the negativity and feelings of inner constraint which abuse has created within us is to acknowledge our own pressing need for inner freedom. For no longer can we live in self-doubt and confusion, filled with guilt-edged trepidation to relive the past because we are still believing our own self-blame that abuse ever took place. No longer can we be afraid to face the truth of our existence or to look in the mirror and see ourselves for who we really are.

As our subconscious goads us onwards on our quest for inner peace a distant memory calls us in self-love... to a time before we knew abuse when—our instinctual centre joyously free from guilt—we truly knew our worth and lovability as people. As we acknowledge this subconscious call we realise that our inner journey has just begun... and that all the answers we have never found since childhood are now within our reach.

As we reach the point in our awareness where we are ready to acknowledge the abuse in our past we have, at the same time, reached new levels of strength and self-honesty in the present. We have reached a crossroads in our lives whereby another path has come into view and we see the path on which we have been previously travelling with new clarity. Suddenly we become acutely aware of the affects which abuse has had upon our lives. The negative emotions which we have always felt since abuse become identified with their root cause and in self-acknowledgement we realise that we have never truly understood exactly how we came to feel so bad about ourselves. We wonder if with new understanding we could clear away this negativity, if maybe there is a way to stop believing that we are not good enough, not worthy enough to not only feel great about who we are but be successful in life and relationships. The other path glistens with hope and promises self-love and we are tempted but wary, for to choose this new direction is to walk into the unknown; it is to leave behind our old ways of coping with life and the negativity we feel and deal directly with memories which have held us in a constant state of inner panic ever since the actual events took place. Yet to stay upon our road which has plodded on so wearily since childhood is to cheat ourselves of a good life; a chance to be free of the psychological and emotional affects of abuse forever. And to look out into the future on this same dreary road is to know that the self-doubts and confusion have no end, for we will not find the answers which we need for inner freedom by continuing to be the child blindly following the negative terms of abuse in the never-ending hope of redemption. Our ears catch distant laughter on a far-flying breeze and the realisation dawns with joy, oh such joy! The new path is *our own path to find ourselves at last -be free, be love itself- and if we choose to walk the unknown we will finally be open to the future... in all its mystery and surprise... beauty and magic!!!* No turning back now. Courage is upon us. We take that first step towards our freedom... ***to reclaim ourselves in love.***

Taking Self-Responsibility

- By acknowledging the abuse in our past - not only that it has happened to us but in acceptance that the events themselves have been self-determining and need to be re-understood now as adults in order for us to truly find inner peace and love for who we are today.

- By acknowledging our present state - realising that we have negative emotions and self-beliefs which have never left us since they were created through abuse.
- By acknowledging that our own happiness and inner freedom is in no-ones hands except our own; that only we can choose to become the person who we want to be - we alone are responsible for our positive growth.
- **By acknowledging within that all the answers to the pain and confusion which we have never found since childhood are possible to find now as adults; that as children we had no way of interpreting ourselves to any greater (positive) extent than abuse allowed us to; that now the lovable truth of all we are is within our reach.**

Acknowledging the Past

Acknowledging the abuse in our past allows us to take a step back from ourselves and honestly see, perhaps for the first time, who we really have been living as since childhood. The affects which abuse has had upon our characters become clear:

- constant sense of guilt/fear to relive abuse
- no positive instinctual connection without guilt
- low self-worth/inability to believe that others can truly value us
- low self-love/inability to trust or believe that others can truly love us
- low self-respect/inability to believe that we deserve respect from others
- low self-belief/confidence in our abilities and unique attributes of self
- low self-belief in our worthiness of individual rights/inability to define them
- sense of physical shame and discomfort
- no feeling of emotional/mental calm or inner peace
- self-hate and recrimination
- inability to feel or connect to loving sexual responses/pleasure
- the constant need to hide all of the above from others at all times

♥ Self-Healing ♥

Find a notebook to use throughout your journey. Getting in the habit of writing down your feelings and responses at each new level of awareness will soon create a wealth of information to draw back on time and again as your understanding deepens and connections begin at rapid pace! Not only that but writing is exceedingly therapeutic; a form of release that will aid all healing within. Let's begin now:

- Write your own list of the affects which abuse has had on you.
- In which ways have you felt held back from being the person who you would like to be? E.g. maybe you would love to express your opinions with confidence but feel held back from doing so by a fear of ridicule or a belief that your opinion is not worth listening to.
- Write a new list of the emotions and beliefs which you would like to feel/have about yourself. E.g. 'self-confidence' and 'able to speak my mind'.
- How did writing this 'positive new you' list make you feel? Which negative self-beliefs came up in response? I mean ones like "I could never be like that" or "I'm scared to do that". Did any negative emotions come up? Like feelings of unworthiness or self-doubt in your abilities for example?

We have allowed ourselves to become accustomed to negative emotional and mental inner responses because we have never been able to understand:

- How we came/deserved to have such horrible senses of self to begin with
- Why we cannot seem to feel or believe anything more positive about who we are
- Why attempting to feel/think more lovingly towards ourselves fills us with guilt/that 'held back' feeling of not being allowed/worthy enough of self-positivity

Reclaiming Self-Authority

Abuse set out certain terms for us, terms which stated that we were unworthy of feeling good about ourselves through being nurtured in our self-worth, self-love or the inner peace created only through a clear conscience and self-acceptance. Abuse removed all these positive senses and our self-worth, love and inner peace became the *personal power* which we no longer deserved to have nor could reclaim for ourselves through any self-authority because (through abuse) we have effectually been rendered powerless in the utter disrespect of all our individual rights:

- rights to self-ownership
- rights to choice/opinion
- rights to voice/expression
- rights to space/privacy
- rights to be respected of our intellectual awareness

This left us with a grave problem: however we did try to then reclaim our personal power - assume the individual rights to do so, the familiar ‘disallowed’ and ‘held-back’ feeling arose to remind us that we no longer had the self-authority to determine our own state of wellbeing through any understanding of who we are, and usually with a bad dose of guilt that we would even attempt to disobey the terms set out for us enough to try. Consequently ever since then we have felt utterly out of control of our own emotional and mental state, unable to positively reclaim:

- Our sense of self-worth because we have continued to believe that we do not deserve to feel valued/have any attributes or qualities worthy of being valued by others.
- Our sense of self-love because we have continued to believe that we do not deserve to be loved/have any attributes or qualities which are worthy of being loved by others.
- Our sense of inner peace because we have continued to believe that we deserve to feel guilty for abuse happening to us/can never accept ourselves whilst the guilt remains.

Since childhood we have continued to believe that our very inability to reclaim our personal power through self-authority to be evidence of our very deservedness of the terms which abuse set out for us:

- We have continued to believe that abuse showed us our correct worth as people/that we are still undeserving of personal power.
- We have continued to blame ourselves for abuse/inwardly believing that we have somehow caused it to happen through our very own natures.
- Abuse remains unanswered; we still don't know how to feel better/reclaim our individual rights to personal power without the sense of guilty disallowance continuing to arise and hold us back from inner freedom. This has rendered us stuck within the terms of abuse until the day we found the courage to understand the truth of it all as adults. Effectually we have been waiting for the person who abused us to relinquish our individual rights through their own respect of them, to allow us finally to believe we now deserve love through their own behaviour towards us.

All of us are beautiful in our own unique way. All of us deserve to feel free inside to love and value who we are, to have the individual rights that make sharing that love with others possible - knowing that they will respect them, respect us. There is no authority – parental or otherwise - that controls our own state of emotional and mental wellbeing as adults unless we allow it. Accept now, right now that YOU deserve to be free! YOU are the only authority in your life! Feel it, know it and strive to believe it more and more every day from now on this amazing journey and beyond for the rest of your life! Reclaiming your personal power is what you've set out to do by picking up this book, accept NOW that all the answers you need to enable this freedom are within you. Resolve to respect yourself in every possible way from now on... know that loving yourself for all you are - without guilt - is possible NOW!!

Rejecting Our Conditioning

As the true reality of abuse and the negative terms which it set out for us to live by begin to register and clarify in our minds, our view of

our reality begins to change. We realise that ever since childhood we have continued to live by these terms amidst only the confusion of never really understanding why we have been stuck within them in the first place. We begin to realise with such sadness in our hearts that a person whom we trusted to care for us and help us grow into strong and positive adults has purposefully manipulated our childlike awareness for their own pleasure; has caused us sorrow for their own gain. As we begin to accept that all the self-doubts and inner negativity which we were left to feel and cope with was intentionally induced, we truly begin to acknowledge that it is now up to us alone to become our own parent, nurturer and friend. *Now we must find out who we are in love and positivity for ourselves by relearning the past for all it really all was- really meant- from adult awareness. It is then that we will see, at last, just how utterly BLAMELESS WE WERE FOR ABUSE; THAT WE ARE SO, SO LOVABLE FOR ALL THAT WE ARE!* As these new found truths seep through our conscious mind, questions arise like:

Who am I?

Why me?

Who would I be if I hadn't been abused? (I've never been myself)

This present wonderment that arises within fills us with an inner yearning to find the true answers to our identity. *This is great progress on our journey... for we are beginning to reclaim our sense of individuality and positive self.* It is the "I" which we are so unsure of after abuse. We spend all our time wondering and worrying about what others think of us and never get to know or love ourselves. So, as we now begin to take positive steps towards reclaiming our own personal power through self-authority, naturally we find EMOTIONS ARISING. These are not only reactions to our recent revelations, but release of withheld trauma and stress which has been pushed away along with the reality of abuse itself, emotions which we were not ready to understand previously:

- **Anger** as the truth of the mistreatment we have suffered begins to sink in; that our childlike awareness has been manipulated for somebody else's gain; that we have believed ourselves to be so unworthy of love and respect ever since **WHEN WE WERE LOVABLE ALL ALONG.**

- **Injustice** that our abusers were allowed to treat us like that; that our individual rights were taken away; that we were led to believe that we did not deserve any better; that since abuse we have never had a true sense of self in any positive way because our abuser took this away from us.
- **Sadness** because we feel like we have lost our whole childhood to abuse and its affects; that since abuse we have been filled with negative emotions and beliefs which have stopped us from ever truly feeling happy in who we are with any level of self-acceptance.
- **Hurt** because we feel completely let down by someone with whom we entrusted all our naivety and innocence.

♥ Self-Healing ♥

- As emotions arise take the time to write them down, write as if you were explaining how you feel to an imaginary friend. Everything, even if it seems disjointed now, will begin to connect up with later realisations, behavioural patterns and even the stuff of dreams, helping you out enormously.
- Do let the anger out; hard exercise (or a pillow punch bag) is a good place to start. Self-expression is great - however horrible the release may sometimes be - the point is we do not want to keep negative emotions pent up in the body for any longer than is necessary. Try to remember that others will not appreciate your anger if misdirected - scream at your 'imaginary' abuser in the privacy of your own room or go and shout out from the top of a hill! Just go with the flow of your own natural release without harming others and this anger **does** need releasing.
- Do speak to others in your family about your feelings of sadness and hurt if this is possible for you. It is a way for you to begin to come to terms with the past. You are seeking the understanding now that you feel is justified for the past. Although we are angry that our families didn't 'save' us or understand that we needed help as children, try to talk about this with understanding that they, as people, were also doing the best that they could at the time. Although it is perfectly natural that you may feel strong anger and a sense of injustice when speaking to them, remember that they will have their own sadness and anger from the same reality of truth which you are facing; as much as possible try to let most of your raw anger out by yourself.

- When we speak to our families about the abuse in our past we are hoping - maybe expecting - that we will hear all the right answers that will help to relieve us of our pain and confusion (to some extent). We hope that by confronting the events of the past they will say all the right answers which we have wanted to be the case since childhood. Definitely we hope to find that members of our family are full of supportive love and a desire to understand our confusion and pain. Certainly we expect them to believe us without question and if they don't, yes it is utterly soul-destroying and causes wells of frustration. We stand up and shout our battle cry expecting our families to rise in strength to confront the abuser; unfortunately, some parts of this reverie may not be the case. Part of our coming to terms with the real reality of the past is an acceptance of the reality of life itself; everyone has their own personal issues to deal with and are all living in their own perception of their own reality (and sadly sometimes of yours – apparently knowing what happened to you more than you do yourself!). Everyone is following a very different inward journey. Different people's ability for acknowledging greater truth which touches the unpleasant- however horrifying it is- varies considerably and unfortunately some may not be in a good place to help you with any true understanding of what you are going through. So remember that you have reached your own point of strength where you are ready to confront past relationships for all that they mean. Other family members may not feel ready for the personal upheaval of acknowledging that your abuser and possibly their own pasts are not in truth the personal picture which they have held dear. Your confrontation of the past will therefore invoke varied emotional responses, some of which may surprise you. Some people may have their own anger and frustration on the subject to vent before they can come to terms with the reality of abuse enough to help you. Unfortunately, some may never come to terms with the truth and prefer to remain in their own version of reality as to past events. Even if this is the case with those closest to us and yes, I know it hurts, deeply so, we still must accept that this is their choice and acknowledge our own need to choose to have those around us instead who will give us the loving support and understanding that we need.

- Remember that those who do try to help us are doing the best that they are capable of to understand how we are feeling. It is impossible for them to ever really know, not only what we are going through now, but just how we were feeling when we were abused and growing up. They need our support and understanding too because in their own process of coming to terms with it all they are hurting and confused. Try to be patient even if the answers and advice which you hear seems wrong or frustrates you into thinking that these people do not understand you at all -the main point is that they are *trying* to understand and help, so let them do that by explaining your viewpoint until it becomes clear and expressing exactly how you *do* feel.

Our Inner Space

Since abuse, we have never been aware of ourselves as having a place of inner sanctuary or peace. We have been filled with negative emotions which have made us want to continually escape from who we are, how we feel inside. As we come to understand these emotions and work towards releasing them we will be freeing our inner space from all the negativity and tension that resides there and coming to know this place, instead, as our own sense of 'being' - who we are in calm self-love and assurance.

☆ Meditation 1 ☆

(Why not record this meditation onto tape using your own voice? It will familiarise you with the words and make the meditation easier to follow.) This first meditation is very gentle, just so we can locate our inner space... become aware of the place where all of our tension resides within. So... ready for relaxation...lie down comfortably and make sure that you are warm enough. Check that your body is well-aligned, your head supported...spine straight...your arms down by your sides....relaxing...palms facing upwards and now feel your legs outstretched... evenly spaced...and allow your body weight to fall heavily beneath you...relax....and now breathe in deeply

through your nose...allow the breath to fill your chest....keep breathing in... and now slowly....breathe out...releasing the air gently...bit by bit...slowly out of your mouth...allowing the sensation of relaxing to sink down...down into your stomach as you do so. Breathe in again through your nose...as slowly as you can and allow your chest to fill up completely with air...keep breathing in...and as you begin to slowly gently breathe out now through your mouth notice where you can feel tension inside, where perhaps resistance is tightening in response to the breathing process. Breathe in again...slowly and deeply and however your inner tension is rising, try to focus only on your breathing...deeply in through the nose...out through your lips. As you breathe in, now notice how the air is golden, see it in your mind's eye burning brightly as it spreads through your chest... relaxing your shoulders... and now filling you with a beautiful, radiating, golden light.....breathe it out slowly....gently... and as you breathe in now... imagine breathing that wonderful energy in deeper and deeper...letting it seep slowly...slowly into your whole body...feeling your stomach sinking deeper down as you breathe out... your arms softening...becoming looser....heavier. Notice where it is in your body that emotions are swelling...rising up within you...maybe telling you to get up.....urging you to leave this place and now focus your in-breath into the midst of it... feeling the golden light moving inside of it...encompassing the emotions....melting tension. Which emotions can you feel? See them dissolving in the golden light...notice how that beautiful energy has now filled your whole body...right down to your toes...how heavy your legs are...so softly sinking beneath you as you now breathe out tension...seeing the golden, sparkling light leaving your lips and winding its way out into the universe...your tension cleansed away inside of it. Keep up this process... breathing in the golden energy...feeling and seeing it fill your entire body...dissolving all tension...aware of your emotions... sending the golden energy to right inside of them... breathing them away...seeing tension dissolving...breathing them away... out into the universe...cleansing away. Keep this up as long as you can... and when you are ready...slowly bring your awareness back up through your legs...your stomach... your chest...your arms...your head and now imagine...very gently the room around you...breathe deeply in....slowly release it and now... slowly...open your eyes...

♥ Self-Healing ♥

How did that go? Take out your notebook and record the feelings which you experienced as you found your inner space.

- What happened as you began to relax deeper into your breathing? Don't worry at all if you found it extremely difficult or even frustrating to breathe deeply or relax. This is to be expected at first. It will become easier... we'll come back to this later on.