

Model: Parikshit Somani ;
Photo: Mary



*the
inner
child*

ALL OF US HAVE AN INNER CHILD WITHIN US, THE SOURCE OF OUR JOY,
PLAYFULNESS AND SPONTANEITY. HOWEVER, ALL TOO OFTEN, IN THE
PROCESS OF GROWING UP, THE CHILD IS WOUNDED. HOW CAN WE
DISCOVER OUR INNER CHILD AND NURTURE IT BACK TO WHOLENESS?

by Ajay Kalra

Leave me! Let me go!" I wailed with tears streaming down my cheeks. My mother held me firmly. We were in the train leaving from Mumbai. The year was 1975 and I was three years old. The incident still brings a knot to my stomach more than three decades later.

The first three years of my life were spent with Kaki and Papaji, my maternal grandparents. An inexplicable twist of fate. For me, they became my parents. When I was three it was decided that I should now be sent to my biological parents. I still remember that day. I was tricked into eating an ice-cream, and while I was at it, Kaki gradually slipped away and I was taken by my mother and an aunt to the train that took me away from Mumbai. Away from my grandparent parents. "Leave me! Let me go!" I thrashed my limbs and kept trying to run towards the door. But I was too tiny to escape my mother's firm grip. Eventually, I let go and went into a deep unconscious sleep that seemed the only escape for the first and most traumatic incident of my life. That day my inner child was wounded. Even though I didn't know it then, my life-long journey of self-exploration, self-healing and self-expression began that day.

What is the inner child?

"Everyone has a child in them!" is an oft-heard sentence. That statement has far more depth than we realise. The inner child is a fundamental part of our subconscious psyche. Emotional experiences and memories stored in our brain from the earliest memory. Our intuitive intelligence, joy, natural self-expression and an overall sense of well-being dwells in the inner child. The child is free-spirited, sensitive, creative, fun, joyful, humorous. Says Sampoorna Garine, a counselling psychologist, who has done considerable work on healing her inner

child as well as holding workshops on the subject, "I felt free racing barefoot on the streets in the hot summer sun. Playing on the front porch with my friend while listening to the adult chatter around us, gave me a secure feeling of doing my own thing while being in the midst of others."

The little child in us desired to be loved, cared and nurtured. Sometimes, these needs were not met, and therefore the inner child remains unfulfilled, unable to integrate itself into its adult self, still pining for healing and wholeness.

When I began my journey into the inner child this is what I imagined. *I enter into my chest looking for a child. I see dark clouds all over with no sign of a child. As I look around I see a door. I open the door and enter an empty room. There is another door in that room. I open this too and enter into another smaller empty room. I keep opening doors and entering into smaller rooms. By now I seem to have entered deep into the recesses of my heart, with no sign of a child. As I am about to turn back I realise that this particular room is unusually dark and small. As I grope my way further, I come across a small figure sitting in a dark corner. It is sitting on the floor with its head resting on its knees and its arms wrapped around its legs. It is scared and crying. I bend down and touch it lightly on the shoulder. It looks up, frightened. It's a face I will never forget. It is me as a three-year-old frozen in time.*

The wounded child

Invariably in the growing up process all of us undergo some incident in our childhood that gives birth to fear. It may be a simple incident. But it's our first taste of rejection, abandonment, failure as humans. "I fell from a tree; no



SAMPOORNA GARINE

"I felt free racing barefoot on the streets in the hot summer sun."





RE-PARENTING

- Giving yourself the nurturing, affection and recognition you need to heal your inner child.
- Giving yourself the guidance, direction and self-discipline needed to gain self-control and to accept personal responsibility for your own life.
- Letting go of self-pity over your being neglected or abused as a child and taking charge of your life.
- Creating a bond between the adult you and inner child you to give you a sense of security, self-confidence and self-worth.
- Accepting yourself the way you are in an unconditional way with no regrets or self-hatred over what you "should" have been.

Source – James J Messina, PhD, psychologist from the internet.

one came to pick me up," says Gurpreet, a Landmark course participant. "My father gave me a shouting for picking an apple from a tray in the neighbour's house. He thought the neighbours would think that my parents didn't give me enough to eat. I was only four," adds Sheetal, another participant. The rejection may begin even earlier. "I was the fifth and youngest daughter to parents looking for a son, and I have often speculated on what my reception at birth must have been like. During a personal growth process, I traced my life-long patterns of rejection, feelings of inadequacy, and low self-esteem to my parents' inevitable disappointment when they first saw me," reminisces Sanjana Verma, a Mumbai-based writer (name changed to protect identity).

Says Roshan Tarneja, a top MNC executive who has difficulty in expressing his feelings, "Though well-off initially, we hit hard times when I was around seven. I recall being ridiculed by my cousins when I asked to borrow their textbooks, because I couldn't afford my own. I went to my mother, crying. She didn't do much about it. I made up my mind that day that I would study hard and become successful. Thereafter, I never

reacted to being ridiculed nor did I make any demands from my parents. I was the eldest and wished to be a role model for my younger siblings. Looking back, I think I grew up much before I was meant to."

For myself, I was put in a boarding school at the age of five and studied there for 11 years. In a boarding school the first casualty is feeling. You are not expected to cry even if you are homesick or you will be labelled a sissy. You are never cuddled, and are required to go to bed all by yourself. I was also exposed to authority figures other than my parents at a very young age. As a result it took me a long while to express feelings. If I didn't express myself I would not be hurt. I was mostly focused on pleasing others. In the process I lost touch with my own needs, own values, my own inner child.

Coping mechanisms

When the child experiences fear of rejection or abandonment for the first time it does not have the intelligence to make sense of that experience. Neither does the tender body have the capacity to experience the trauma completely and thereby release it from the system. It develops coping mechanisms. These are unconscious habits we pick up to numb the pain. When they are repeated over a period of time, they form addictions. They may range from overeating, pornography, dependent relationships or violence. At another level they can also be seen as karmic patterns we may have carried from previous lifetimes, getting reaffirmed in this life. Sanjay, a Mumbai-based photographer, says, "Pornography and masturbation were my escape mechanisms from fear, and I would often slip into promiscuity. One part of me was deeply sensitive, and another part of me promiscuous and unable to form a committed relationship. It was like being torn apart inside."

Says Chris Griscom in her book, *Healing of Emotion*, "There are two primary emotions: fear and anger. Fear is the feminine, the yin way of experiencing our hurt of separation... Anger represents the male, the yang way of expressing our pain of changing dimensions... Between the two, fear is more dangerous. For while anger keeps the organism in motion, fear and anxiety swallow up and gnaw at the organism and drown the vital forces."

Sanjana recalls being crippled by fear as she moved into adulthood, still a child inside, "I was very much petted by my elder sisters who loved dressing me up and displaying me like a doll, and bullied by my immediately older sisters who probably resented the attention given to me. I grew up

HOW DOES THE "WOUNDED CHILD" COME INTO BEING?

The "wounded child" comes into being by:

- A denial of true feelings.
- A denial of the person we are.
- Trying hard to live up to others' expectations.
- Holding back our child-like responses, while we provide adult-like responses to stress.
- The fear of being "found out" about how we really feel.
- Insecurity in the midst of chaos, confusion or the vacuum of repressed feelings.
- A sense of obligation to always "look good" and "be good".
- Inexperience at being loved for "who you are" rather than for "what you do".
- Not being given the role model of how to "enjoy" life and to have "fun".
- A lack of encouragement to broaden our scope of vision about the "potentials" in life.
- The stress of staying vigilantly in the "here and now" so that we stay in control and the "walls didn't come tumbling down" around us.
- Silencing our "inner child" and guarding ourselves, retreating behind "masked" barriers.
- Feeling that it is not safe to grow up, to accept love or to share feelings..

Source – James J Messina,
PhD, psychologist from the internet

CALIFORNIA HYPNOSIS INSTITUTE OF INDIA



INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY OF LIFE

Course	Dates/ Venue	Facilitator	Contact Details
Step I :- Basic Course in Integrated Clinical Hypnosis	13th - 15th Apr 09, Mumbai	Dr. Afshan Nafis	Dr. Afshan Nafis + 91 9821974221
	18th - 20th Apr 09, Mumbai	Dr. Kirti Bakshi	Dr. Kirti Bakshi + 91 9820745740
	24th - 26th Apr 09, Mumbai	Dr. Veena Shrikant	Dr. Veena Shrikant + 91 9324282233
	08th - 10th May 09, Mumbai	Dr. Rajiv Naidu	Dr. Rajiv Naidu +91 9820800120
	16th - 18th May 09, Chandigarh	Dr. Bina Gopal	Dr. Bina Gopal +91 9811318141
	29th - 31st May 09, Mumbai	Dr. Kirti Bakshi	Dr. Kirti Bakshi + 91 9820745740
Step II :- Integrated Healing	05th - 07th Jun 09, Mumbai	Dr. Afshan Nafis	Dr. Afshan Nafis + 91 9821974221
	16th - 19th April 09, Kolkatta	Dr. Aasha Warriar	Ms. Neerja Poddar + 91 9830129292
Step III :- Certificate Course in Hypnotic Modalities for Behavioral Resolutions	09th - 12th May 09, Ahmedabad	Dr. Yuvraj Kapdia & Dr. Neeta Yuvraj	Dr. Hervez Barucha + 91 9925470445
	15th -19th Apr 09, Mumbai	Dr. Jimmy Mody	Dr. Jimmy Mody + 91 9870027801
	29th Apr - 03rd May 09, Mumbai	Dr. Rajiv Naidu	Dr. Rajiv Naidu +91 9820800120
Step IV :- Regression Therapies and Foreign Energy Dynamics	06th -10th May 09, Kolkatta	Dr. Aasha Warriar	Ms. Neerja Poddar +91 9830129292
	16th - 19th May 09, Bangalore	Dr. Yuvraj Kapdia	Ms. Shilpa Jhaveri + 91 9611226422
Step V :- Integrated Clinical Hypnotherapy	20th - 23rd Jun 09, Kolkatta	Dr. Yuvraj Kapdia	Ms. Neerja Poddar + 91 9830129292
	11th - 14th & 16th - 19th July 09, Kolkatta	Dr. Yuvraj Kapadia & Dr. Neeta Kapadia	Dr. Neerja Poddar + 91 9830129292

Office: 022 65792869 (between 10am to 6pm);

For Workshop enquiry call +91 9833402655.

Email: info@iaolonline.com & info@californiahypnosis.in

Website: www.iaolonline.com & www.californiahypnosis.in

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF ACTIVITY OF THE "INNER CHILD"?

We know our "inner child" is active when we:

- Lose ourselves in frolic and fun.
- Cry at a sentimental movie or TV show.
- Enjoy playing with children's toys.
- Love visiting theme parks designed for children.
- Seek out adult toys to play with.
- Cry or grieve as adults for the losses we experienced in our past.
- Get sentimental looking at old photo albums, home movies or scrapbooks about our childhood.
- Experience the same intensity of feeling we had as children as we role play or act out experiences from our past.

Source – James J Messina, PhD, psychologist from the internet.

very spoilt, very lazy, very unsure of myself, expecting to be looked after, and almost incapable of taking responsibility for my life."

Consequences

The consequence of losing touch with our inner child results in loss of self-expression; of who we are. Although we may achieve success or distinction as adults, our inner lives will be in disarray. More often than not, we will not know what we truly want or what will make us truly happy. We are unable to access a joy that can touch our souls.



AJAY KALRA

"I was mostly focussed on pleasing others. I lost touch with my own needs."



This may result in work choices misaligned to our true nature. For over a decade I struggled with my choice of becoming a chartered accountant when I had no inclination for that work. I realised much later that it wasn't a choice at all. I was flowing with external circumstances without having any internal navigation of where I wished to go. How could I do otherwise? I had lost touch with my inner child long back. I now work in the area of organisational and individual transformation.

It is not work, it is a joyful expression of my inner child.

Sampoorna recalls that her father had separated from her mother when she was about two-and-a-half years. Living with her mother's parents and extended family, she was not conscious of missing her father. It was only when she found the pattern of loss and separation recurring in her life that she recognised that something was amiss.

"I lost my grandfather when I was 17 and my mother when I was 22. My marriage broke up for exactly the same reasons as my mother's did – women and alcohol. I realised I was not acknowledging the truth, and made a conscious effort to recognise facts and be open about it."

Why heal the inner child?

Healing the wounded inner child holds the key to our wholeness. If we desire liberation from the past and the freedom to experience our full and unfettered being, we cannot dismiss this task. It does not mean that we have to necessarily undergo inner child workshops or processes. Any inner work that enables us to integrate ourselves will suffice, but it is necessary to recognise that your work is not over, no matter how equanimous you are, until your inner child is healed. How can you tell? Are you playful, joyous, spontaneous, have a great sense of humour? If the answer is no, then there is work to be done. After all, the spiritual journey begins with innocence, forfeits it in the process of growing, and is complete only when innocence returns, garbed in wisdom.

When the inner child is healed and well, he or she integrates harmoniously with the adult. The individual becomes child-like, but not childish. He is at one and the same time, deeply serious and deeply playful. He acts with integrity and takes full responsibility for his feelings, thoughts, words and

actions. But he also knows how to dance at a wedding baraat, or respond to the moment's call spontaneously. The range of responses is wider, and she is never at a loss on how to respond in any situation in life. Healing the inner child also enables us to establish boundaries with other people so that we are never hijacked by other people's agendas.

Healing the inner child

One of the most important milestones in healing the inner child is to complete your relationship with your parents. Any incompleteness with either parent blocks our energies tremendously.

In *Healing of Emotion*, Chris states that it is crucial to comprehend that it is we who have made the choice as to when we are born and to what parents. She shares that when she finally understood that she had chosen to have her parents separated as an instrument of her growth, "a tremendous burden of sorrow and guilt lifted away and from that moment I have never felt any sadness of being a child of divorced parents". The first time I came across the concept of a parent, adult and child was during a Transactional Analysis programme. Later, I discovered a technique called Re-parenting. In simple terms it means being a loving parent to yourself.

In my journey towards healing and expressing the inner child I interacted with two communities that are committed to this work. Inner Bonding (www.innerbonding.com) and InterPlay (www.interplay.org). Interestingly, both have different approaches to working with the inner child.

I came across Inner Bonding, an internet community of sincere adults committed to learning and growing through connecting with their Higher Self, and by loving their inner child. Started by Dr Margaret Paul and Dr Erika Chopich, Inner Bonding is a 6-step pathway to healing the false beliefs that limit us. The core of inner bonding is on having dialogues. I realise having these dialogues are an extremely impor-

tant aspect of connecting to my inner child. They not only allow healing but also bring tremendous clarity.

Says Dr Margaret Paul, “The basis of Inner Bonding is intent. There are only two intents: to protect or to learn. When our intent is to protect, we are avoiding our painful feelings with some form of controlling behaviour – anger, blame, caretaking, resistance, substance addiction, and so on. When our intent is to learn, we want to learn about what we are thinking or doing that is causing our pain and what is the loving behaviour towards ourselves and others. Inner Bonding process heals inner aloneness. Through the practice of Inner Bonding, you develop such a strong connection with your personal spiritual guidance that you know you are never alone.”

Expressing the inner child

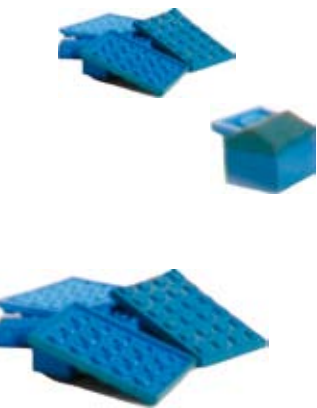
The other extremely beautiful practise I experienced was InterPlay. Founded and directed by Cynthia Winton-Henry and Phil Porter, InterPlay is about unlocking body wisdom and expressing the inner child. Attending a three-day InterPlay workshop was exhilarating, particularly when it was conducted by Cynthia and her team of American and Australian InterPlayers. I couldn't have imagined that becoming a child for three days, running, walking, stopping, singing, babbling, singing would unlock such inner energy. Says Trish Watts, the founder of InterPlay Australia, “InterPlay is designed to give people tools to get more of what they want in their lives by paying close attention to their own experience and wisdom. The primary creative pathways used in InterPlay are movement, storytelling, singing and stillness. ” I recall Cynthia saying in the workshop, “Why are the easiest things hardest to do?”

Other methods

Others have used different methods. Sampoorna has worked with a range of methodologies, “The Louise Hay work, the ‘Radical forgiveness’ method and ‘NLP’ have been extremely powerful. Also books by John Bradshaw, Betty Edwards, Heather Williams and Julia Cameron. Recently, InterPlay was a joyous, playful, yet healing experience. I now use all these methods that have worked so well for me, in my work with others. The Vipassana meditation without conscious thought to it, played a large role in dissipating old, blocked energies so I could move on.”

Recalls Jasmine Bharathan, an energy psychologist, “Initially, I got in touch with my inner child only when my adult self got into some emotional trouble. One day it hit me. I was actually abandoning “her” all over again when I did that! That moment transformed my relationship with “her”. I started connecting with her every single day regardless of whether I had a good day or a bad day; a good moment or a bad one. My contact with her has become a connection not just to heal but to grow together and become harmonious in the flow of life.”

A spiritual awakening inspired Sanjana to work determinedly towards wholeness. In the process she noticed that her psyche had split into three distinct entities. “One was the parent whose job was to watch me hawk-eyed all day, and rap me when I made a mistake. ‘How can you be so stupid? I just can't stand you,’ it would rant. Then there was the inner child, a diminutive sabotaging figure who was always doing what the authority figure was telling me not to do. Finally, there was the Higher Self, the person I really was and who I was moving towards, whose ideals the parent (entity) had taken upon itself to enforce. It took me years and years of constant affirmation and acceptance of myself to reach a



stage where I could finally accept myself and integrate these three parts of me.”

Says bestselling author Louise Hay, in her book, *The Power is Within You*, “In order to be whole, we must accept all of ourselves. The parts you are proud of and the parts that embarrass you. The parts you reject and the parts you love. They are all of you. You are beautiful. We all are. When your heart is full of love for yourself, then you have so much to share with others.”

Father Prashant Olelekar, a Jesuit priest who has brought InterPlay to India, says, “Since I was teased while preparing for a school dance performance I began to feel that I was not a good dancer. Thanks to the wonder of InterPlay I have recovered my lost childhood.”

The inner child journey

So does the inner child heal completely? What happens then? These questions could be answered if life were a static process. The evolution of consciousness is a journey, not a point.

Says Sanjana, “Although the journey is never ending, about a month ago, I simply began giving myself permission to be angry, sad, to dislike someone, be lazy, greedy and so on, all of which were marked as cardinal sins in my mind to be resisted vigorously. Immediately, all these urges or impulses settled down, and I have been feeling a great sense of peace.”

She adds, “The inner child is dancing with joy these days. Increasingly, I am becoming more and more playful indulging in a few skips and hops when I am at home, or making up a silly song, or breaking into a spontaneous dance. These moments seem like pure being, free of artifice or self-consciousness.”

Sampoorna reflects on her journey, “I now feel more whole. I really like myself and am



Happy InterPlayers say cheese

my own best friend. It is a wonderful feeling, accepting myself with all my flaws. In the most difficult times, I experience a strength from within knowing I am there for me. I teach others today to be playful and enjoy the whole process of growth. It need not be a serious, painful occupation. While my loving, happy parts are easily lovable, I am learning to love those mean, selfish and jealous parts of me that really need my love and acceptance. With love, the resistance withers and the part heals and transforms. Staying connected, I am more aware, in the present, living with a sense of peace and joy which I share with others. I feel a continuous sense of growth and expansion.”

As for me, I see my inner child playing happily in the garden of my heart. A far cry from the time when I discovered him locked in the recesses of my subconscious. He expresses himself freely without any blame, shame or judgement of self or others. Yes, sometimes he’s anxious and complains. Am glad he does. It’s a sign that he is alive and kicking.

Louise Hay has the last word: “Let your child go and play with the other children. Let your child dance. Let your child feel safe and free. Let your child be all that it ever wanted to be. You are perfect, whole and complete, and all is well in your wonderful world.”

And so it is!

Ajay Kalra is a life coach, writer and facilitator for change in individuals and organisations. Contact: ajaykalra07@gmail.com; www.lifelessons99-wordpress.com

We welcome your comments and suggestions on this article. Mail us at editor@lifepositive.net

