

# TALKING TO OURSELVES & Taking Charge of Our Lives

*The first part of any problem  
that I must solve  
is that which  
is between me and me.*

## Emotional Sobriety and Fear

Emotional Sobriety is a philosophy to be applied, not a goal to reach. Emotional Sobriety is a daily practice that requires our conscious attention to the details of how we are responding, both interpersonally and INTRApersonally, to the world we inhabit. In other words, emotional sobriety calls for us to accept full responsibility not only for our behavioral responses but also for how we interpret our experiences. Emotional sobriety provides new perspectives and specific techniques that afford us opportunities to change from the inside out. Emotional sobriety teaches, and reminds us daily, that the mind (your mind and my mind) is all that we control.

Emotional sobriety engages us in rational thinking, compassion for self and others — and challenges us to clearly define our beliefs and values.

Central to the practice of emotional sobriety is healing our relationship with our emotional selves. Emotional healing, for it to be authentic and lasting, will always include honing in on fear. How we respond to what scares us is a determining factor in the effectiveness of our emotional sobriety practice — aka quality of life.

AN INTRODUCTION TO  
**INTRApersonal Process**

*What I hear, I forget*

*What I see, I remember*

*What I do, I understand*

-Chinese Proverb

Intrapersonal psychotherapy directly addresses each person's unique internal structure of consciousness with metaphor, active imagination, role play, psychodrama, journaling, visualization, and other creative methods. Based on an understanding that the nature of consciousness is multiple, rather than singular, a client is guided to translate perceived interpersonal and situational conflict into intrapersonal problem definitions. The philosophy of "healing from the inside out," is pivotal to this therapeutic approach.

Intrapersonal relationship dynamics, in most cases, accurately mirror a person's relevant interpersonal patterns. For instance, a person who is in a negative relationship with others who are critical or condemning of her will be guided to explore an intrapersonal relationship between her authentic self and some sort of "inner bully" that agrees with external criticisms. Or, a person experiencing an addiction or an eating disorder is taught to see herself "in relationship" with a personification of her "inner culprit."

Intrapersonal therapy focuses on these internal "codependent" relationships, to strengthen the client's ability to differentiate "self" from "problem," and teach him/her to use the ability to make such a distinction to accept full responsibility for decision-making in his life. By personifying inner "characters" to represent conditions and problems such as addiction, eating disorder, anxiety, self-condemnation, the therapist can bring to light cognitive patterns that inhibit growth and change. By teaching clients how to identify and separate from "toxic" characters (negative beliefs about self and environment) and how to create --- or enhance --- "positive," supportive characters, intrapersonal therapists can help the client discover, define, and develop an authentic identity that includes both strength and appropriate vulnerability.

## Beginning the Separation

*Before we are one,  
we are many*

### **Consider this monologue (from Embracing Fear)**

I am afraid, I am weak for being afraid, I am a chicken. It is normal to be afraid, and being afraid doesn't make me a chicken. I am weak and definitely a chicken. I am confused, I am weak, I am not that abnormal, I am normal, I am the furthest thing from normal. I am pitiful. Besides being weak, I am crazy --- just listen to my thoughts. I think I'm OK, no real problem here. I am the poster child for problems. I'm pretty sure I'm fine. Weak. No problem.

### **Now consider the monologue translated to dialogue:**

Me: I am afraid.

Bully: You are weak for being afraid. You are a chicken.

Me: It is normal to be afraid, and being afraid does not make me a chicken.

Bully: No. You are weak, and definitely a chicken.

Me: This confuses me.

Bully: Sure, you are confused because you are weak.

Me: I don't think this is unusual, I'm not that abnormal. In fact, what I am experiencing is normal.

Bully: [Laughs] You are the furthest thing from normal. You are pitiful. Besides being weak, you are crazy --- just listen to your crazy thinking.

Me: No, I think I'm OK. These "crazy thoughts" are just you insulting me. No real problem here.

Bully: No problem?! You are the poster child for problems!

Me: I'm pretty sure that I'm fine.

Bully: Weakling!

Me: No, I don't think so.

(Notice that the critical voice--- The Bully --- in this dialogue does not change its opinion, and does not have to change its opinion in order for me to feel better.)

## More about Separation

***ME: Do I talk to myself?***

***ME: No, of course not. That would make me crazy, wouldn't it?***

***ME: It certainly would.***

### **Culprits/Saboteurs**

- Authentic aspects of yourself vs. Programmed Bots
- Forget that this is metaphor
- Never forget that this is metaphor

### ***The Model***

- Changing the Problem Definition — from Possession to Relationship
- Positive Dissociation (Separation) changes everything
- PowerPoint presentation and puppet show

### ***Wisdom within You...***

We put a lot of emphasis on establishing this separation, this positive dissociation, this differentiation between the authentic you and inner saboteurs that are essential repetitive robotic messages. The primary goal of this separation is to help you identify the authentic you, the you who is responsible for responding to what the bots have to say. We learn to disagree with ourselves INTRApersonally. I see you, I hear you, I disagree with you.

In some ways doing this work puts us in a space of knowing more about who we are not, than who we are. We can use some help. Enter: the Wisdom Voice. (Aka: Recovery Voice, Positive Inner Parent)

## Listening

The voices of fear and shame are louder than the voice of inner wisdom.

Wisdom will not yell at us. Wisdom does not insist that we listen.

Wisdom does not demand that we believe what it says.

Wisdom does not retaliate when we ignore it.

Fear and shame, on the other hand, do all of that.

Fear and shame are bullies that follow us everywhere.

The mistake we make is thinking that we have to get rid of fear and shame or at least quiet them.

We do not. We cannot. To try only serves to discourage us.

What we can do is learn to seek the guidance of inner wisdom, to listen so intently that the wisdom voice becomes dominant even in the noise of fear and shame.

*Thanks for coming to the party.*



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