

Taming your Outer Child: Overcoming your Self-Defeating Patterns

An Overview

Susan Anderson © July 7, 2014

You've met your inner child—now meet your *outer child*, the self-sabotaging nemesis of your personality—the part that breaks your diet and gets attracted to all the wrong people.

Whereas Inner child is all about feelings, Outer child is all about behavior.

Outer Child acts out your inner child's feelings - especially your abandonment feelings - without giving you, the adult, a chance to intervene. When you feel hurt, angry, or insecure, Outer acts out these feelings in ways that sabotage your relationships. Outer takes feelings like anger and fear and goes off hell bent, impulsively making matters worse. It's like an annoying, obnoxious older sibling was only trying to help, bungling in an attempt to protect (overprotect) you from abandonment. Stealthy, quick, and misguided, it intercepts love before you ever know what happened.

Outer child acts out in patterns. It is a master procrastinator, rationalizer, avoider. You can use Outer child as a self-awareness tool. In discovering your outer child, you get a leg up on overcoming your self-defeating patterns, improving your relationships, and becoming the self-possessed adult you always wanted to be. Outer child is featured in *Taming your Outer Child; Journey from Abandonment to Healing; Journey from Abandonment to Healing*, and *Journey from Heartbreak to Connection*. Some find it helpful to attend an abandonment recovery workshop to learn how to effectively target their outer child patterns.

Outer is the impulsive, obstinate, self-centered ten-year old within all of us. Outer wants what Outer wants NOW, and overrules you, the adult, in getting it. Outer prefers to binge on candy when you are steadfastly sticking to a diet (or so you thought). Outer says yes

to a third glass of wine when you, the Adult, had decided on a two drink maximum. Outer thought that meant minimum.

Outer child is born of unresolved abandonment. It wreaks havoc in your relationships when it acts out your inner child's primal fear of abandonment. For example, it aims its emotional suction cups at our prospective partners and scares them away.

In taking the outer child inventory, you undertake the first in-depth self-reckoning of your lifetime. As you gain outer child awareness, you own up to character defects most people prefer to deny. You learn how to deal with traits that until now formed an invisible infrastructure of self-sabotage deep within your personality.

Outer fights change—especially change initiated by you, the adult. Outer balks at doing the right thing and only wants things that are bad for your health, figure, or bank account. By bringing Outer out of the bunkers and into the daylight, you get to subvert its mission, rather than let it subvert yours.

Outer grabs for immediate gratifications that sabotage your long range goals. You decide to pay down your credit cards, but Outer gets you to buy a shiny new boat. You decide to go on a fitness program, but Outer gets you to pay for the annual membership, but prevents you from actually using it.

Outer is fueled by emotion. Take anger. Outer either overreacts or under-reacts to your anger. For example, abandonment survivors tend to be too insecure to risk expressing anger or assertiveness to someone because they fear it might break the connection. Outer takes advantage of this fear and gets you to take your anger out on yourself, damaging your self-esteem. Conversely, Outer takes your anger out on innocent bystanders and makes you look like a monster.

Outer is the “yes but” of the personality. If you let it, Outer ties your life up in knots.

Outer child likes to play games, especially in relationships. It wears many disguises including “hard to get” and “Florence Nightingale” (where Outer panders for 'love-insurance' by over-caretaking). It poses as your ally, but is really your gatekeeper. Its covert agenda is to maintain your patterns—albeit your most self-defeating ones.

By deconstructing your Outer Child defenses, your Adult Self has the opportunity to guide your behavior, rather than remain driven by your hidden nemesis.

I continue to collect data on Outer Child, so please **email** me with your own unique Outer Child characteristics as well as your comments. Thank you for your help. www.outerchild.net. Try the “Outer Child Inventory.”

To read more about outer child: *Taming your Outer Child: Overcoming your Self-Defeating Patterns* (Ballantine 2010); *Journey from Abandonment to Healing* (Berkeley 2000); and *WORK-BOOK, Journey from Heartbreak to Connection: A Workshop in Abandonment Recovery* (Berkeley 2003).