

The Original Wound?

Adapted from
Why You Get Sick: How You Get Well by Dr. Arthur Janov,

Edited by Susan Peabody

*Note: This is an article about the “problems” that we face and why they hurt us so much. For what to do about the problem (for advice on how to transcend or heal from childhood wounds) I refer you to my books which all, except *Where Love Abides*, teach you about the solution—how to build self-esteem, how to change, how to heal and self-actualize—all paths to a happy life.*

Painful things happen to nearly all of us early in life that get imprinted in all our systems which carry the memory forward making our lives miserable. It is the cause of depression, phobias, panic and anxiety attacks and a whole host of symptoms that add to the misery. We have found a way into those early emotional archives and have learned to have access to those memories, to dredge them up from the unconscious, allowing us to re-experience them in the present, integrate them and no longer be driven by the unconscious. For the first time in the history of psychology there is a way to access feelings, hidden away, in a safe way and thus to reduce human suffering. It is, in essence, the first science of psychotherapy.

—D. Arthur Janov

“Repressed pain divides the self in two and each side wars with the other. One is the real [authentic] self, loaded with needs and pain that are submerged; the other is the unreal self that attempts to deal with the outside world by trying to fulfill unmet needs with neurotic habits or behaviors such as obsessions or addictions.

“The *split* of the self is the essence of neurosis and neurosis can kill.

“Our pain is the result of needs and feelings that have gone unfulfilled in early life. Those early unmet needs create what I call Primal Pain [Original Wound]. Coming close to death at birth or feeling unloved as a child are examples of such Pain. The Pain goes unfelt at the time because the body is not equipped to experience it fully and deal with it. When the Pain is too much, it is repressed and stored away. When enough unresolved Pain has occurred, we lose access to your feelings and become neurotic.

“The number one killer in the world today is not cancer or heart disease, it is repression. [Therapy] is important in the field of psychology, for it means, ultimately, the end to so much suffering in human beings. Discovering a way to treat Pain means there is a way to stop the misery in which so many of us are mired every day of our lives. After two decades of research, after dealing with

thousands of patients with every imaginable psychological and physical affliction, we have arrived at a precise, predictable therapy that reduces the amount of time one spends in treatment and eliminates all the wasted motion. It is a therapy that has been investigated by independent scientists and the findings are consistent. [Therapy] is able to reduce or eliminate a host of physical and psychic ailments in a relatively short period of time with lasting results.

“Feeling Pain is the end of suffering.”

“We have found ways to measure the ongoing presence and chronic effects of early trauma. We have observed time and again that even though it is not felt, the force of the memory remains in the system, reverberating on lower brain levels and moving against the body wherever it happens to be vulnerable. It shapes our interests, values, motivations and ideas. By reliving these traumas, patients can return back to early events and know with certainty how they formed adult behavior and symptoms.

“Repression is the hidden force behind illness”

We can see how buried memories constantly activate the system, putting pressure on vital organs and creating disruptions which can eventually result in serious illness. The problem for too many of us is that suddenly we find ourselves with afflictions or obsessions [addictions], and have no idea how it all happened. We don't know why we can't sleep, why we can't find a mate, why we are obsessed with this idea or that or why we don't function as we want to, sexually. [Therapy] can clarify these seeming mysteries.

“Delving deep into the unconscious has allowed us to clarify the basis of adult behavior. We have a good idea what lies in the unconscious and it doesn't seem to be the mystical emporium so often described. We have learned that irrespective of whether the Pain is manifest in the body or in the mind, the person is not himself; there is a dislocation of function which is global. Both emotional and physical pain deform cells and cause alterations which show up in measurements of vital signs, brain function and chemistry, the immune system, hormones, peripheral blood flow and in a person's behavior. Everything is askew.

“Instead of working from symptoms to possible causes, we work from causes to symptoms. The focus is always deep. From this approach we have developed a more profound understanding of who we are and what drives us, our basic, hidden, unconscious motivations. Let me give you an example.

[One of my patients told me once he was] . . . was flooded with insights. He told me that his whole life seemed to have suddenly fallen into place. This ordinarily unsophisticated man began transforming himself in front of my eyes into what was virtually another human being. He became alert; his sensorium opened up; he seemed to understand himself.

“The attempt of the child to please his parents I call the Struggle. The Struggle begins first with parents and later generalizes to the world. It spreads beyond the family because the person carries

his deprived needs with him wherever he goes, and those needs must be acted out. He will seek out parent substitutes with whom he will play.

“Many parents make the mistake of not picking up their child sufficiently out of fear of “spoiling” him. By ignoring him, this is precisely what they do, and later they will be swamped by the child’s insatiable demands for symbolic substitutes—until the day they crack down on him. The consequences of that are both inevitable and dreadful.

“Out of his neurotic drama, he will make almost anyone (including his children) into parental figures who will fill his needs. If a father was suppressed verbally and was never allowed to say much, his children are going to be listeners. They, in turn, having to listen so much, will have suppressed needs for someone to hear them; it may well be their own children. . . .

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Note from Susan: Looking for surrogate parents is the beginning of one problem in particular: love and relationship addiction. They all begin by projecting a composite of our primary caretakers on to another person (the Imago) who we then become addicted to. (For more about the Imago Relational Theory see Harville Hendrix in any one of his books.

I am not endorsing Primal Therapy. Let others judge it who are more qualified. I do believe in this analysis of the root cause of our current problems. But it should not stand alone as the only deception. I respect most professionals who write about this. I selected The Primal Scream to adapt for my clients, among other reasons, because it so easy to read and understand. The original article can be found on the internet. <http://www.primaltherapy.com/what-is-primal-therapy.php>

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