

“What Do I REALLY Need?”

Dear Connie -

The holidays have come and gone, and once again I'm disappointed in the way I was treated by my family. My parents have been stingy since I was a child. I've resented that all my life, but I'm used to it. My husband is the same way. This year was no exception, but it was worse than usual. He only got me one small gift—a pair of gloves—because our budget is tight and he says I didn't seem to need anything else. I feel cheated and angry that he doesn't care enough about me to have bought me something more special. I know I'm holding a grudge, but I can't let it go. Can you help?

—Carol

Dear Carol,

It is understandable that you have been disappointed by what appears to be a lack of generosity in your family. The desire and expectation for material expressions of love, particularly around the holidays, is normal in our culture and is often greatly inflated by advertising. We are encouraged to think we “need” a great deal more than we actually do.

That said, what I'm hearing about your particular experience is that you were repeatedly disappointed in your childhood, and you have wanted your husband to make up for that by being more generous than your parents. But, as you said, he is not inclined to be. It is uncanny how we tend to choose partners like one or both of our parents.

From the Pathwork perspective [www.Pathwork.org] there has been a recreation of a childhood hurt in your marriage, perpetuating feelings of anger and resentment. We often unconsciously recreate childhood wounds in our most significant relationships. We do this in order to heal those childhood wounds and old, outworn beliefs that are embedded in the psyche. So, first comes the similar experience, which triggers the old pain of unfulfillment, then we have the opportunity to explore what this is really about and to heal the original wound.

When we are children, we want exclusive love and attention. We want all our demands met, whether they are real needs or false. We have a real need as children for love, care, support, and safety. We also have false needs—a doll as big as our best friend's, the latest toy seen on TV, unlimited sweets, etc. It is up to our parents to respond to our real needs and teach us the difference between real and false needs. Perhaps your parents were stingy with love and atten-



tion, and you took their meager gift-giving as material evidence that they didn't love you.

Perhaps you received little compared to your siblings or friends, leading to a sense of deprivation. If you wish to get beyond the pain of the original hurt, which is affecting your marriage now, you need to allow yourself to revisit the childhood memories and feelings that are still buried beneath the anger and resentment you are aware of. You will most likely find deep sadness and a false belief such as that you are not loveable. Receiving “just” a pair of gloves from your husband, rather than something more glamorous or expensive, would be seen as just one more “proof” that you are, indeed,

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unlovable. Further confirmation of something you already believe.

If your real needs were not met in childhood, it is likely that a false need for material possessions was created. But the truth is that the real needs of childhood are not the same as the real needs of adulthood. The belief, that the only way the original pain can be eliminated is that someone must make up for it and give us all that was lacking, is a false belief. That craving can never be satisfied. The fulfillment that you long for will only come when you find what you are searching for within yourself. Your suffering now "is the denial of the original pain and the consequent negative and destructive patterns of feeling and thinking." [Pathwork Lecture #192]

As adults, we have some real

needs, such as self-expression, growth and development, reaching our spiritual potential for loving relationships, fulfillment, and the realization of our unique contribution to the greater good. Real adult needs are never about a requirement that others give us what we want. This may be a difficult concept at first, but worth contemplating. If you truly want to change, you might consider beginning to journal about your childhood experiences and feelings around this issue. That will help you reach greater awareness of the roots of the false belief and its link between then and now. Working through this issue with a counselor in individual or group sessions will probably reap the greatest benefit. ■

Good luck, Carol!

—Connie

Do you have a relationship question? E-mail Connie, conniem@mcn.net, or call 406-582-7450 and ask! E-mail sent to Connie is read only by Connie Myslik-McFadden, MSS, LCSW, and will be held in strictest confidence. No identities will be published. Disclaimer: The responses to questions in this column are for information only. Never disregard professional advice or delay seeking it because of anything you read here. Working with a skilled professional is highly recommended. Copyright © 2009 Connie Myslik-McFadden. All rights reserved.

Connie Myslik-McFadden, MSS, LCSW, is a psychotherapist in Bozeman with 25 years of experience working with individuals, couples and groups. She leads workshops, retreats and teaches Dreamwork and Pathwork. Connie devoted 9 years to Jungian analysis, training, and supervision, after graduating from the Bryn Mawr School of Social Work. She went on to graduate from the Barbara Brennan School of Healing, and Society of Souls, a kabbalistic school of healing. She is the author of "Gathering the Soul, a True Story of Spiritual Healing." Pathwork (Pathwork.org) and Imago Relationship Therapy www.GettingTheLoveYouWant.org are two easily accessible sources



for the theories upon which much of this column is based.

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