

Workbook Chapter Eleven

Heal Your Inner Splits

Self-Assessment Tools:

Self-Quiz: Was Your Family of Origin A Source of Hidden Inner Demons?

Barry K. Weinhold. Ph.D.

Directions: Using the following 25 characteristics of dysfunctional families, rate your own family of origin. In the blank before each item, place a number from 1 through 5. 1 = Not present at all; 2 = Present to a small degree; 3 = Present sometimes; 4 = Present most of the time; 5 = Present all of the time

- ___1. The family promotes competition rather than cooperation. This means that children are compared with each other and sibling rivalry is actually promoted.
- ___2. There is a misuse of parental power. Parents may use their power to threaten, intimidate, control, and subjugate their children to obey their will. This usually involves a deliberate, but often unconscious, attempt to break the will of the child, often while the child is still an infant. It is often justified as "necessary for their own good."
- ___3. There is no respect for the basic human rights of children or women. Women and children are treated like chattel or property, without basic human rights. Children are expected to be seen and not heard and have no needs or wants of their own.
- ___4. There are rigid, compulsive rules. There is an attempt to over-control or over-regulate the behavior of family members through rigidly enforced rules. Reasons for rules are usually not provided and obedience is mandatory.
- ___5. There are rigid gender roles. The boys or men are supposed to follow their traditional roles and the girls or women theirs. No exceptions are allowed. People tend to interact with each other through their roles rather than through their individual interests and needs.

- ___6. There is no sharing of housework or household chores. Women and girls are expected to handle the household chores; the boys and men are exempt from these duties. Boys growing up in this type of family often expect to be waited on by their spouses when they get married.
- ___7. There are no joint family activities planned. This type of family is very fragmented, and there are no structures or planned activities, such as family outings, that promote unity and family bonding.
- ___8. The economic condition of the family is kept secret from family members. In these families, children are not told about the family's income and little or no financial responsibility is shared appropriately with other family members.
- ___9. There is no respect for personal privacy. Children do not have their own personal space or property. Toys, clothing, bedrooms, furniture, and personal items belong to the family not individuals. Parents do not respect their children's needs for privacy or boundaries.
- ___10. There is no shared decision making in the family. The head of the household makes all the major decisions, and other family members have very little say in these decisions.
- ___11. There is no shared parenting. Almost all parenting is done by one parent, usually the mother. The father is absent or not involved in the day-to-day parenting, and perhaps is only involved occasionally in disciplining the children.
- ___12. There is no support for the expression of feelings. Family members are taught to hide their feelings or are punished for their attempts to express normal feelings such as anger, sadness, fear, or even joy.
- ___13. The main forms of discipline utilized are spanking, threats, or shaming. The level of physical or emotional violence is high in these families. Usually there is abuse of alcohol or drugs by one or both parents.
- ___14. Win-lose conflict resolution methods are utilized. Whenever there is a conflict, someone wins and someone loses, instead of finding a solution where both parties can win. Partnership resolutions require

a set of problem-solving skills that most parents don't have.

- ___15. No one admits making a mistake or apologizes for their actions. Parents are always right in these families, and they present themselves as infallible. If they make a mistake, they try to hide it or explain it away instead of owning it and apologizing to those who were affected by the mistake.
- ___16. Problems are blamed on others. There is a defensiveness in the family; when something bad happens, there is a quick attempt to blame it on someone else. There is no personal accountability or responsibility for one's own actions.
- ___17. There is resistance to outsiders. There is a "we versus them" attitude toward anyone outside the family. The family is not opened to guests coming in or to sharing with others outside the family.
- ___18. Loyalty to the family is seen as a duty. Children are expected to defend the family against outside criticism, even when the family is in the wrong. Protecting the family name is overemphasized.
- ___19. There is resistance to change. Even though the family has obvious dysfunctional elements, there is strong resistance to changing them. There seems to be a fear that any change may bring about something worse. Sometimes people have lived for generations with these dysfunctional elements and have become comfortable with their "familiarity." To change them means going into unfamiliar territory.
- ___20. There is no family unity. In this type of family, "two against one" triangles develop to create some unity or safety. There is often a lot of indirect communication where one person may communicate to another through a third person.
- ___21. There is no protection from abusive acts. In this type of family, every conflict is swept under the rug. Children may be emotionally, physically, or sexually abused by one or both parents, and the other parent does nothing to protect the child from this abuse. This can also be true in sibling abuse, where an older sibling abuses a younger one and nothing is done by

either parent to stop the abuse or protect the younger child.

___22. Conflicts in the family are often ignored. In this type of family, every conflict is swept under the rug rather than resolved effectively. This often causes a heavy, oppressive family atmosphere in which there is conflict in the air and no one is talking about it.

___23. There are a large number of family secrets. Almost every family has some secret they don't want people outside the family to know. The children are admonished not to reveal these secrets. However, in many instances the children are not told these secrets and the presence of these secrets colors relationships among family members. Often some members know the secret and others don't, creating "unholy alliances" in the family.

___24. There is little joy or laughter in the family. In these families, parents often feel overburdened or overwhelmed by the job of parenting, so they can't have fun or allow laughter in the family. In some families, the only laughter that is permitted is when someone is teased or made the butt of a joke. This is a dysfunctional form of humor.

___25. The children are unplanned or unwanted. More than 50% of all children born in this country are either unplanned or unwanted. Children often know they are unplanned or unwanted, even though no one ever tells them. An illegitimate birth is often kept as a family secret.

___ **Total Score**

Scoring and Interpretation:

Add the numbers in the left-hand column to record the total score of how you perceive the level of dysfunction present in your family of origin. Below is a suggested interpretation of your overall rating.

If your score was between:

25- 50 - There was almost no evidence of hidden developmental traumas present in your family of origin that could cause you to reenact them in your present life situation.

51-75 - There is some evidence of hidden developmental trauma present in your family of origin that could cause you to reenact them in your present life situation.

76-125- There is considerable evidence of hidden developmental trauma present in your family of origin that could cause you to reenact them in your present life situation.

Caution: Too rosy a picture of your family of origin could indicate some denial of these hidden developmental traumas and their possible effects on your tendency to reenact them in your present life situation.

How Parents Can Facilitate the Creation of Healthy Narcissism Barry K. Weinhold, PhD

The facilitation of healthy narcissism by your parents requires that they do the following things. Note: Even though you may not remember what happened to you, ask yourself, *"From what I know of my parents, do I think they did any of the following things to me when I was a toddler?"*

- React calmly and reassuringly to any of your aggressive impulses.
- Support your attempts to become separate and autonomous instead of being threatened by them.
- Allow you to experience and express natural feelings and urges such as rage, fear, jealousy and defiance.
- Allow you to develop and follow your natural curiosity safely during each developmental stage, rather than overprotecting or requiring you to do things to please them.
- Be available both physically and emotionally when you needed them.
- Permit you to express conflicting or ambivalent feelings and treat those feelings seriously and with respect.
- See and treat you as separate from them, as someone with your own needs, wishes, fears, dreams, and accomplishments.
- Provide you with twice as many "yeses" as "nos."

- Childproof your home to allow you to explore safely.
- Set appropriate and safe limits without use of shame or physical punishment.
- Use "*time in*" instead of "*time out*" when you got upset to help you learn how to reregulate your emotions.

Case Example

Mary, age 38, chose me to be her therapist. In the Betterhelp referral system they have the profiles of all their therapists. People who sign up for Betterhelp can read these profiles and choose who they think they want to work with. If someone chooses me, I have to take them as a client.

Mary put it this way, "We never seemed to get to the root of my problems and I thought it was my fault. She added, "When I read your profile, I knew that you would help me get to the root of my problems and the root we did." I had her take some of my self-assessment tools and began going over each item where she scored high using my 4-step process. She is able to find things she can do now to finish what she left unfinished in her rather chaotic childhood.

She had an alcoholic mother, with a mental illness, probably a borderline personality disorder. Mary said she was constantly afraid of her mother. She beat Mary with a belt. She was very unsteady, always angry at someone or something. She never felt safe. When she was about 2 she fell in to a woodstove and got burned. She swallowed a penny and almost choked.

Her mother would smack you across her face, pull her hair, and choked her repeatedly. Her father divorced her mother when Mary was 16. Her worst memories of her mother were when she would go to bars and bring home guys to sleep with her. This happened repeatedly.

Through our work on looking at what she missed and how she could finish it now, Mary saw that she needed to set boundaries with others and get her voice back. Recently she said to me, "I never liked myself. Now it is nice to like myself."

