



Stuck in Steps 1-4, Part II: Over-Processing as a Strategy to Avoid Living

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In Part I of *Stuck in Steps 1-4*, I talked about my Wounded Self's very good reasons for cycling between steps one and four of the Inner Bonding process and being afraid to take loving action. I used an image of myself as a child up on the diving board as an example. It looked like this: Run down the diving board. Chicken out. Run. Chicken out. Run. Chicken out. Run. Both as a child and as an adult, my erratic and repetitive behaviors came down to the usual Wounded Self symptoms: fear and control. My Wounded Self was afraid of getting hurt, and so she tried to get me to stay small and avoid taking action in the world.

In this article, I am going to share one of the ways that my wounded self has often tricked me into processing as a way to avoid action. After that, I'll discuss how I learned to recognize when internal action was not enough and how I discovered my bravery.

One of my Wounded Self's most brilliant strategies for trying to keep me safe, keep me loved, and keep me *alone* is by going to the mountains to do Inner Bonding. You might think that it doesn't get much better than doing your Inner Bonding process in the mountains. And, to some extent, you would be right. I frequently take my entire Inner Gang out for beautiful hikes in the mountains, where I can explore the ways that I am abandoning my Inner Child and where I can tend to my Wounded Self who is filled with fears and false beliefs. I listen to them; I see them clearly; I see how young and wounded they are. I show up as their Adult and understand that I need to take care of them. I go to guidance and ask for the truth and allow the truth to wash me in tears of grief and relief. Having had this reconnecting conversation with all the parts of me, we have a great day in the mountains, feeling excited about life, and feeling loved and lovable inside.

But, the mountains, all too often, have become a place where I *rehearse* the action that I *want* to take, but don't end up taking when it comes right down to it. The mountains have been the place where I have gone to "practice", to learn the truth, and to tell myself the truth. But, they have also become the place where I let myself get stuck. The mountains are my worn-out diving board with a shiny, new edge. My body never gets to feel the exhilaration of a courageous plunge into the unknown, because my body never gets wet.

After years of doing Inner Bonding, my wounded parts feel very comfortable doing *inner* exploration. But, the truth is, they also love to do things like follow their passion, learn how to be financially abundant, build friendships and business relationships, and put themselves out there: their beliefs, their feelings, their needs. But, when they have told me they wanted to actually *do* some of these things, what have I said to them? I have said, "Ok. Let's go back to the mountains so that we can talk about it some more!"

When I was saying “yes” to my inner exploration, but “no” to the exploration of the rest of life, what I was really saying to my Inner Child was this: “I love you, but I am too afraid.”

How will you know if you are stuck in steps one through four of Inner Bonding? How will you know if you over-process to avoid life? You will know by the way that you feel inside *over time* (Step 6).

The most common side effect of over-processing and telling your Inner Child, “I love you, but I am too afraid”, is depression. I “depress” my Essence, my aliveness, my creativity, and my passion when I am too afraid. So, although I can often temporarily relieve my depression when I am in the mountains, it will always come back if I am not willing to find and engage the part of me that is brave.

It has taken a long time for me to actually discover the part of me that is brave, but when I found her, I realized that I had merely *rediscovered* her. She’s actually the same part of me that learned how to courageously explore steps one through four of Inner Bonding. She’s the one who was willing to become curious about my Inner Child’s feelings and to ask a seemingly big and scary Wounded Self about her “very good reasons” for engaging in her protective strategies. My bravery has always been in me. I just needed to take my cue from my Inner Child when she was ready, and to begin channeling it in a new direction. For me, that new direction meant a shift from inner exploration to expression in the world.

What does it mean to be brave? My Core Child told me what it means for her. It means sometimes being willing to take the advice from the title of the late Susan Jeffers’ book, *Feel the Fear and Do it Anyway*. It means putting on your Nike tee shirt, so that you can “Just do it!” It means saying, “Yes,” when a part of you wants to stay comfortable and back away. And, it means being willing to not look perfect, to make mistakes, to get your feelings hurt, to be rejected, and even, to fail. It requires choosing to let yourself live, no matter what the cost.

For me, I have found that the cost of not letting myself live was too much. My Core Child was dying. I had to find my bravery and say, “Yes” to creative, vibrant, silly, messy, imperfect, sometimes lonely, confusing, embarrassing, frustrating and terrifying, uncontrollable life on this planet. My Inner Child still loves going to the mountains, but she is thrilled that I have now made her happiness more important than trying to control the world and its opinions of me by steering clear of the habitated areas. She is happy that I no longer just love her in isolation. I have also learned to love her in the messiness of life among others—even those that I don’t know yet.

If you are like me, and you cycle through steps one through four of Inner Bonding, and in certain areas of your life you are reluctant or afraid to take loving action, I encourage you to explore the very good reasons for this. Explore your very good reasons, have a good cry, and then run down the diving board and LEAP.

Karen Kral is a licensed psychotherapist who offers Inner Bonding Intensives and Workshops in the Boulder, Colorado area. Please check out www.corequestpotential.com for information on Karen's upcoming intensives and workshops, or see the 5-Day, 3-Day and Weekend Intensives and Weekend Workshop headings on the Events page of the Inner Bonding website. Karen lives just outside of Boulder with her husband, Mark Lersch, who is also a Certified Facilitator of Inner Bonding.