



Stuck in Steps 1-4, Part III: Professing Love vs Being Love

In the first two parts of Stuck in Steps 1-4, I discussed the very good reasons why someone, like me for example, might cycle between steps one and four of the Inner Bonding process and avoid taking concrete action in the world. I talked about my own strategy of going into the mountains to dialog as a way to feel safe and comfortable and to avoid the rest of my life. I briefly touched on depression, the tell-tale sign that one is avoiding loving action, and about bravery, the cure for the type of depression that results from inaction.

This article is dedicated to the experience of the Inner Child when we *profess* love but neglect to *be* love, which means to take loving action on our own behalf in the world.

In those times when I have been too afraid to act, I have erred on the side of keeping my Inner Child in a very controlled environment, a place where she is told that she is loved and appreciated and precious, but a space where she actually cannot thrive. For me, when I don't take loving action on behalf of my Inner Child, it looks something like this.

Dear Inner Child, there is only one house rule:

You can basically do anything that feels relatively comfortable for my Wounded Self. Anything that brings up more than a small amount of fear is out of the question.

Oh, and by the way, I love you.

As I wrote this preposterous, but unfortunately true, rule that I used to make my inner child obey, I was, to my horror, reminded of the mother of one of the girls on my street when I was growing up.

As far as I can recall, I had never actually seen this mother before this particular day in my memory. I don't think I had ever knocked on her door, which makes sense because her daughter was the person who competed with me for the time and attention of our joint best friend. Well, for some reason that I can't remember anymore, I knocked on the side door of the house because I needed to give this woman information about her daughter.

The mother opened the door. Her hair was long, black and mangy, pulled to one side in a low ponytail. Her face was pale and sallow, and she seemed completely lacking in vital energy. I sensed hollowness in her, as if she were barely alive. I imagined that the entire house was dark, that all the shades were pulled down, and that she existed in this place where she intentionally blocked out the daylight.

Caught off guard and instantly repulsed by the sheer energy of this woman, I reacted outwardly to her in a way that I would never have done with any of the other mothers I knew at the time. I puffed up inside as I felt this take-charge wounded part of me arise. I was bold, arrogant and judgmental. And, I made a stern and scolding comment that must have felt like quite an affront to her. Something about this woman shocked and disgusted me. And, I didn't want to be anywhere near her. At some level, I think I sensed that she lived in fear, and this frightened me. I didn't want to know anything about this woman or her fear. I just wanted to run back into the sunshine—down to the creek where the butterflies and caterpillars were; down to the school where the swing set was; where my friends were, and where we could do silly things and not give a care about this strange thing called fear--fear that stops, that binds, that sucks the life out of, that depresses, and that kills. No, I didn't want to know anything about that.

But, as fate would have it, when my own life threw me some curve balls, and I found my heart closing and the cells of my body contracting in paralysis, I, too, got a good taste of this fear. And, I realize now that when—in the face of that fear—I refuse to take loving action on behalf my Inner Child, I am just like that shrunken, scared and contracted woman who scared me out of my wits when I was a child.

How can it *ever* be loving to tell someone that you love them, but then to imprison them? How can it be loving to take one's vital Essence and put it off until tomorrow? How can it be loving to say, "I want you to live and thrive do fun things", but then to say, "I'm too scared"?

Do you tell your Inner Child that you love him and then put him in a prison? Does she tell you that she wants to do creative things, but you put the kibosh on her projects? Do you let him take tiny steps outside of the iron gate—to take a risk here or there—but then shut him back in his cell because it all just seems too intimidating? Do you tell her that she is safe with this person or that person in your life, but that you're going to keep her far away from others (I'm not talking about abusers) who may not like her or share her views? Do you tell him you will get around to writing the book, or song or television program that he wants to create, but then procrastinate and never do it? Do you listen to her tell you about how much she loves to dance, but then never let her risk looking like a "fool" on the dance floor?

What is it that your Inner Child or even one of your adolescent parts has wanted to do, but that you have been too afraid to allow? I know, it seems so benign, doesn't it? You're telling them that you love them. In my previous two articles, I thought that was pretty good. But, I guess there was a good reason why my Guidance gave me that image of my friend's mother down the street. It's not benign to not act. So many who have had mothers or fathers who didn't act on their behalf know exactly what I am talking about. Not acting is not loving. We can have compassion for our very good reasons for not acting. But, it is important to remember that someone is getting hurt inside when we don't.

If you have not been taking loving action in the world on behalf of your Inner Child, what is one small step you can take today to move beyond professing love to actually *being* loving? Ask your Guidance this question. Then, ask your Guidance for help in moving beyond the fears of your Wounded Self into taking one small loving action for the part of you that truly wants to *live*. Take yourself out of the box today, let yourself breathe, and say “yes” to this one precious life.

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