

P A R T 6

Healing Your Wounds



I have only three enemies. My favorite enemy, the one most easily influenced for the better, is the British Empire. My second enemy, the Indian people, is far more difficult. But my most formidable opponent is a man named Mohandas K. Gandhi. With him I seem to have very little influence.

-Mohandas K. Gandhi

Healing on the Inside



*You have no idea what a poor opinion
I have of myself—and how little I deserve it.*

-W.S. Gilbert

He would lie awake at night thinking about what it would be like. Thinking about life without the nagging pain. The pain that permeated every cell of his body.

Laying alone there in the dark. Smoking cigarette after cigarette. Dwelling on how everyone else had wronged him. Holding onto every slight, real and imagined. Weaving a web of explanations and excuses.

“If only this, if only that,” played in his head all night long. It didn’t make the pain go away, but he couldn’t imagine how much it would hurt without that familiar chorus playing in his head, numbing himself to what deep down inside he knew to be the truth, always finding some way to push it out of his mind.

As he drained another beer or downed another shot, he would make plans. Plans for a better tomorrow. Plans for a way to undo all the yesterdays of his life. Fantasy. Now that was a game he could play.

The nights that he hadn’t drowned himself in cheap booze, self-pity was his drug of choice. He would shout at the top of his lungs, cursing the fates. Cursing them for not making him better than he was. For he never could shake the feeling of being damaged goods. No, that feeling had haunted him his whole life.

Defective didn’t even begin to describe the feeling. Inadequate was just a quaint word to him. Worthless, well compared to the way he felt about himself, that didn’t even make a dent in describing the relationship that he had with himself. No, you had to weave those three words together, almost invent a new word from the three

to even begin to adequately describe the feelings he had about himself.

And this was the foundation of the relationship he had with himself. Not what the world could see. No a couple hours of sleep, a cold shower, and a little attitude, that was all he needed to shield the depth of his true feelings from you and me.

He had once read a book in which the author had used the word *toxic*. That would be a good beginning at trying to describe it. That seemed most accurate when he thought about the relationship that he had with himself. He laughed at all the cute phrases that were floating around in his culture. *Heal your inner child, learn to parent yourself, start to nurture yourself*. “Oh please, give me a break,” he would think to himself.

Things seemed to be getting worse. He wasn’t able to contain it the way he used to. He couldn’t fake it anymore. As a kid, he would hide behind all the wildness, all of the false bravado. The only thing the bravado got him was more trouble than he could handle. It also left him believing more than ever that he was truly damaged goods.

If you asked him, I don’t think he would be able to tell you that he was just plain scared, yet if you were at all conscious you couldn’t miss it.

Some things settled down as he got older, but he never could shake the feeling that he didn’t quite fit in. He bounced from job to job. Always feeling like an outsider, never quite trusting that anyone would want anything to do with him.

He masked that too. You see, he had become funny in a cute kind of way. So nobody thought to look beyond

the jokes, always the soft ways he would put himself down.

The more the jobs didn't work out, the more convinced he was that there was something about him that just wasn't right. What were the words the books threw around? *Unhealthy. Dysfunctional.* "Yea, that's me," he figured.

"Oh, but when I become healthy, then I'll show 'em what I can be." That was the fantasy he retreated to more than anything else.

"I just have to fix me. I just have to figure out how to lose all of this."

Just what was *all of this*? Well, he never saw it as hurt. It never occurred to him that it was the pain of wanting so badly, needing so mightily, someone to be there for him. Pain and fear, what a combination that made; but no, it never entered his mind that that's what this was all about.

Could it have been the desperation of wanting to be loved but never letting anyone in? Maybe, but he couldn't tell you that. Don't leave out despair—the inevitable despair of not feeling accepted, or even acceptable for that matter. It just never occurred to him that this was all about being human.

He saw it as ugly, even petty. To him it was grotesque, something that was undesirable. The only truth it held for him was how ashamed he was of it, how he hid from it. The lump in his throat from all of the anger, bitterness, and resentments rolled up into one ball. All the humiliation he inflicted upon himself, all the fear he had of somebody else humiliating him, as well. Feeling like he never quite fit the bill. A feeling of

emptiness that nothing he tried could fill.

This thing. It consumed him. It overtook his life. But not in any way that was obvious to you or me. What overtook his life was the way he tried denying that it was there. Bending it, twisting it, presenting it to the world in a way that might look acceptable. You would have never guessed the depth of what he was feeling, what he was hiding.

"Maybe, just maybe," you would have thought to yourself, "he just has to find himself."

But all along he thought something very different. "No way. There's no way they're going to pin anything on me. No one's going to discover what's buried in the depth of my soul. This *just feel your feelings crap.*" No it was much, much more important for him to push it all away.

He would have laughed at the idea that this was simply about being human. For being human couldn't hurt this much. He would have shrugged his shoulders if you would have tried to explain that his pain was really caused by his humanness being bent and distorted by his own fears, his own discomfort with his vulnerabilities.

He tried to make it go away. All those years he tried to pretend that it was never there. All those years he tried to numb himself to the experience of being human. Jumping in and out of relationships. Bouncing from job to job. Friends seemed to come and go, but mostly go.

The way he would explain it all? He would say that he was damaged. He would never have seen that it was him doing this to him. He would never have seen that he wasn't broken. Nothing about him was defective. Sure he

was hurting, had hurt his whole life.

But most of that pain was of his own making. Most of the pain was self-inflicted. Most of the pain was born out of the relationship that he had with himself.

So, he never thought about his life as the experience of being human. Sadly, he could never see that what he believed to be the truth about himself—that he was broken and unhealthy—was merely the means by which he expressed his discomfort with being present in his life, experiencing all the terror that's part of being human. Sadly, he put most of his energies into attempting to fix the *problems* rather than accepting the experience of just being human.

There's nothing more toxic or more enriching to our emotional and spiritual well-being than the relationship we have with ourselves. Can you see how the regard that we have for ourselves influences every aspect of our life?

Very simply, depending on the nature of the relationship we have with ourselves, we will:

- ☞ attract people who will either honor us or tear us down.
- ☞ create strong connections with the people in our life or alienate ourselves from those very people.
- ☞ actively create a life of fullness and meaning, or passively maintain a life of emptiness and despair.
- ☞ consistently shape our life to align with who we are, or live our lives following someone else's plan.

It's easy to see how our self-inflicted wounds poison us. We drift further and further away from our genuine

self by investing more and more of our energy into keeping out of our conscious awareness who we genuinely are.

Our life becomes dedicated to masking the presence of those parts of ourselves that we hold judgments about. Much of our energy becomes focused on hiding from our awareness those things we judge to be unacceptable about who we are.

Along with a life created by our own self-condemnation, we oftentimes add to our feelings of self-alienation because of the powerlessness we feel about our inability to create our own life, to follow our own choices. We so burden ourselves with the prejudices we hold against ourselves that we lose our ability to distinguish between what is truth and what is our own self-critical judgments.

Do you recognize any of the following judgments?

- ☞ We judge ourselves to be worthless and incapable.
- ☞ We judge ourselves to be powerless and ineffective.
- ☞ We judge ourselves to be small, frightened creatures who're incapable of exerting any influence to change from within.

From these judgments, it's only one small leap to making fact out of these fictions. Fictions that are merely a reflection of our own prejudices rather than an accurate assessment of what we're capable of. It's a tricky dance because we feel so strongly all of those things we believe to be true about ourselves. And when we feel it, we carry those feelings to their seemingly natural conclusion, we make *facts out of those feelings*.

As a result, we lose sight of our personal capabilities. We lose sight of our power. And ultimately, we lose sight

*J*udge Not and Ye Shall Not
Be Judged



There are many who are living far below their possibilities because they are continually handing over their individualities to others. Do you want to be a power in the world? Then be yourself. Be true to the highest within your soul and then allow yourself to be governed by no customs or conventionalities or arbitrary man-made rules that are founded on principle.

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

Pathfinder's Tip



Accepting that we're imperfect beings rather than judging ourselves to be damaged goods is a necessary balm for creating a shift in the relationship we have with ourselves.

The night had been full of awe and wonder. I finally had visited Jodi's new home. I swear she had performed an absolute miracle. Forget that she had done most of the work herself. Forget that she had turned a shambles of a house into a majestic home.

No, the miracle was not that Jodi had pulled it off, because Jodi can do anything. The miracle in my mind was that she did it because of her unshakable belief in her vision, her unwillingness to forsake what was possible. She simply refused to be blinded by discouragement and hard times. She had pulled it off without the support of her family and friends. Indeed, they were some of the greatest obstacles she had to overcome.

You see, Jodi had found a house that was a handyman's dream. It wasn't in the greatest of neighborhoods, so anyone who cared about Jodi was dead set against her buying and rehabbing the house.

When she saw the house, all she could see was the potential it possessed. When her friends saw it, all they could see was how rundown it was. Friends would stare in horror at the condition of the house. Floors rotting away. Ceilings with holes in them the size of basketballs. Walls barely standing.

But all Jodi saw was what the house could become. The potential that existed in every nook and cranny. Jodi, ever the cock-eyed optimist, didn't see anything as being damaged; nope, everything in her mind, everything about the house was charm and character. Never mind the warped floor boards. Jodi never saw the destruction and decay, to her it was only the inevitable cycle of life evidenced throughout the entire 3000 square feet. Ruined. Hopeless. Daunting. Damaged. Irreparable. All ways her friends depicted the house.

But Jodi—Jodi never thought of the house in those terms. Never for a moment would she allow her spirit to be paralyzed, even infected by her friends' judgments. Potential. Possibilities. Style. Elegance. Warmth. Integrity. Those were her words. That was her vision.

Hard work. Don't talk to Jodi about hard work. With Jodi, hard work is always a given. Not because she has some twisted work ethic. She just understands that she always has to work to get to where she wants to be.

Well, the tour of the house was breathtaking. Although looking at the album of before and after pictures was boggling, nothing could recapture the smell of ruin that permeated that house only a short eight months ago. As we sat and talked, reliving the horror stories of the project, sharing the joy of Jody's vision coming to life, I was stumped. How could we have all been so wrong? All we could see was the destruction, yet she was able to see beyond what the house was in order to believe what the house could be.

So I asked Jodi. I asked her what her secret was. How could she have known that what she started with eight months ago would have turned into such a palace?

She pondered the question for a moment, cocked her head to one side and said, “I don’t know. I guess I accepted the house for what it was. Never, ever did I dwell on what the house was not. Most importantly, I chose to see only the house for what it could become.”

You know, that’s not such a bad formula for how we might live our lives, for how we might relate to ourselves and the rest of the world.

How best to apply Jodi’s principles for rehabbing a house to healing the relationship we have with ourselves? We need to accept that we’re not broken; rather, we’re imperfect beings who are growing and evolving.

To view ourselves as broken and in need of repair is the deepest, harshest wound we can inflict upon ourselves. Such a belief fuels and maintains our isolation from ourselves and the people in our lives. This wound keeps us hidden in the shadows because we limit the ways we feel safe in expressing who we are.

It’s easy to see how this wound sends us into hiding, keeping us in the shadows. We hide from ourselves. We hide from the people in our life. We hide from our spiritual power.

Do you recognize what we are hiding from? Hiding from being found out. Hiding from being judged by others in the way we judge ourselves. Hiding from our fear. Our fear of not being liked and accepted, being rejected for all of the things we’ve already rejected about ourselves. So we tuck away those pieces of ourselves: you know the old adage, *out of sight out of mind*. Those pieces never to be claimed by ourselves, only to be disowned and unacknowledged.

And so the trauma perpetuates itself as we attempt to

dress our wounds. Do you recognize the ways we dress our wounds?

- ☯ We follow a path of self-condemnation rather than a path of celebration.
- ☯ We follow a path of judgment rather than a path of acceptance.
- ☯ We follow a path of repair rather than a path of discovery.
- ☯ We follow a path of achievement rather than a path of enlightenment.
- ☯ We follow a path of filling the emptiness created by our wounds rather than a path of filling our soul with love and forgiveness.

No, it must be plain to us all by now, that we must forsake many of the ways we’ve gone about the business of healing.

- ☯ Healing does not come from filling the void with the trappings of our culture.
- ☯ Healing does not come from the temporary means we have to soothe ourselves.
- ☯ Healing does not come from smothering our pain in our compulsions.
- ☯ Healing does not come from the emotion-numbing experiences of drugs and alcohol.
- ☯ Healing does not come from the ways we lose ourselves in work, achievement, and self-destructive relationships.

How does healing take place? Hopefully there’s a glimmer stirring here, an understanding of how to go about creating healing within ourselves.

**Give to Ourselves What We
Gladly Give to Others**



*Compassion for myself is the most powerful
healer of them all.*

-Theodore Isaac Rubin

Pathfinder's Tip



*Healing will envelop our soul as we embrace
the belief "I deserve."*

"Why do I keep putting myself in these situations? It seems like I'm always setting myself up for a big fall! Every time I think that there's the slightest glimmer of hope, the slightest reason to believe that I'm changing things around for myself, boom, I fall right back into the same old destructive setup."

Mikey and I were taking our Sunday walk along the lakefront, talking about the ways we manage to trip over ourselves.

"Mikey, what happened?" I asked.

"I really thought I was better able to see it coming this time. I thought I understood all I needed to understand so that it wouldn't happen again."

"Understand what, Mikey?" I asked, still not understanding anything.

"I thought by figuring it out, I wouldn't step back into it, you know what I mean?"

"No, I don't know what you mean," I told Mikey.

"I thought I had fixed me, but I still keep falling back. Wouldn't you think that just once, I would be with someone who cared about me for me. But noooo, I always set things up so that I find someone who needs me, but doesn't have a clue about how to care about me.

"Sure, I know all the signs, but time after time, I find myself right back in the circle. I know I feel safest when I'm needed. I know I believe the only reason anyone would want anything to do with me is because I'm like a loyal St. Bernard, always coming to the rescue. I know I should believe that someone could actually value me for me but noooo, have you ever seen me try that tact before?"

I was running out of ways to get Mikey to explain to me what happened, so I just went along with his soliloquy.

"No, Mikey, I've never seen you try that tact before."

"And do you know why that is?"

"No, Mikey, why?"

"Because, I can't picture myself being with someone without all the chaos, without all the noise that goes with being needed. I know my part in that drama real well.

"But I would be lost in any other play. I think I would be second-guessing myself a lot, you know questioning myself. You know why that is, don't you?"

"No, Mikey, why?"

"Cause I just can't get past these feelings that I don't deserve it any other way. These feelings that it can't possibly be any other way, that I can't be any other way."

"Mikey, come on man, what the hell's this all about?"

"As long as I'm pouring all of my attention and energy into my partner, it's draining and it's lonely. But you know what, the truth of the matter is, it's safe as hell. I don't have to risk very much. Well, at least, risk having to show myself to anyone else.

"You know what the real truth is, Steve?"

"Mikey, I lost sight of that ten minutes ago."

"The truth is I don't know how to let someone care about me. I think I would crawl right out of my skin.

Answer me this—just how do you let someone care about you when you don't believe you deserve it, when you feel like everything in this world carries a price tag, that things are bought and paid for but never simply offered and received?"

"Mikey, I don't know how to answer that, but you know man, I care about you."

"Yea, yea. I know and I appreciate that, I really do. But you know what, I don't always feel right about that either. There were times that I just didn't feel like I deserved it. Man, it's hard to explain. But to be honest with you, that's why I used to disappear so much. I just couldn't let it in for too long, still can't really."

"I always knew how hard it was for you, that's why I would back off, as well. But, we got past that."

"Yea, but I can't get past that with the women in my life. I feel so trapped. On one hand, I keep setting myself up to take care of the world and then when the world doesn't give me anything back, I become angry and resentful. On the other hand, I don't dare try to do it any differently because I'm afraid of letting anyone be there for me."

"I'm afraid that I'll be a disappointment to them, that they'll be put off by who I am. Even if they get through that maze, I just don't feel like I deserve to be cared about."

Mikey is a prisoner of his emotional needs and how he chooses to get them met. The thing that Mikey is unable to tap into is a sense of entitlement. But you know one of the most profound shifts that I witness most people go through is precipitated by letting into their lives two little words, *I deserve*. When those two words become a

part of our heart and soul, we can move mountains.

These two simple words can set us free from the messages we feed ourselves. The messages that ooze from the toxins that infect the wounds we have inflicted upon ourselves. The messages that limit our opportunities to grow and become who we're most capable of being.

I never cease to be amazed at the power that these two words hold for us once we embrace them with all of our being. Think about it for a moment.

Do you embrace with all of your being the fact that you're deserving of a life that's an expression of who you are?

Do you embrace with all of your being that you're deserving of a life that fills you with an abundance of love and support?

Do you embrace with all of your being that you're deserving of a life that reflects who you are rather than what you're afraid of being?

Do you embrace with all of your being that you're deserving of having people in your life who support rather than undermine your well-being?

Can you see how the process of healing is developing an unabiding belief—a belief that we're deserving of the things we dare to dream about? Can you see how believing *we're deserving* will bring an end to the tyranny of worthlessness that we've imposed upon ourselves?

Let's take this a step further.

Do you recognize what your own self-imposed limits are?

Do you recognize the areas of your life that cause you pain because you deny that you deserve it to be any different?

Do you recognize how your life's a perpetual conflict between what you want and what you allow yourself to have?

Rearranging Our Priorities



*In the midst of winter, I discovered an
invincible summer.*

-Albert Camus

Pathfinder's Tip



We will experience a shift in the relationship we have with ourselves when we start healing our insides rather than trying to change who we are on the outside.

My grandfather loved to tell us stories when we were growing up. He was one of those guys that thought that everything should have a lesson to it and he was the one who was going to teach us those lessons. Every story had a moral to it that he wanted us to learn, so he would lecture us for hours on end after telling us one of his stories.

This is a story he once told about a young girl who possessed great joy and beauty. She lived on a small farm in a simple house. Several times a week she would go to town to buy food for the family.

Every time she came to town people spoke to her. Her spirit had an unusual way of attracting people.

For example, the woman who worked at the market would often say to her, "My dear, your eyes are so pretty today, they glimmer with a natural beauty. I was saying to Mrs. Hobbs next-door just this morning, that you may soon catch a husband without ever enhancing your eyes with shadow at all. Of course, can you imagine how much more attractive you might appear to a man if you put on a beautiful shadow?"

The young girl would nod her appreciation and leave.

The next time the girl would come to the market, the woman might comment on her hair. For instance she would ask, "Is it difficult to braid your hair? Your hair seems so coarse and bleached by the rays of the sun. I have noticed that the times you tie your hair with a ribbon and bow, large curls form as it falls around your shoulders. I was thinking that such conditions might make your hair unmanageable and difficult to control. Is that true?"

"Not really. I just let it be what it will be," the girl replied.

"Of course you do, dear," said the woman. "I imagine that will change when you want to show the world who you really are. When you want more from life."

"Why would it change?" asked the girl.

"Because you will want to be really beautiful!" said the woman. "Everyone knows that beauty comes from appealing to what *others* want. When you are ready, come to my house, then I will make you beautiful."

The girl spent the evening thinking about what the woman from the market said to her. Never before had she looked outside herself to find beauty, but what if there was a special secret she didn't know. After all, she was still single and lived with her parents while most of the women of the town were married with homes of their own.

After thinking about the market woman's offer for several months, the girl finally relented and went to the woman to ask that she make her beautiful.

The woman gathered all her friends and together they set out to make the girl beautiful. She instructed her friends, "Her hair has to be parted and pulled back tight."

Then it was decided to lace the girl's hair with vines and dried flowers.

Feeling that the job was not just right, the woman added a small stuffed bird.

Next they went to work on her face. Now the instructions were, "Her face should be painted white with powder and then red on the cheeks to stimulate the golden rays of the sun. Finally, we must cover her in perfume that will attract men."

When the girl returned home later her mother had a fit. Her brother laughed. Her father was silent with shock.

Embarrassed by her family's reactions, the girl avoided going into town over the winter months. Finally, by spring most of the makeup had worn away.

On returning to town in the spring, the woman at the market greeted her with shock.

"My dear, what has happened to you? When I last saw you, you were beautiful, the way we had made you up. Now you are only a simple farm girl again."

The girl replied, "I can only be who I am. Everything I add to try and change myself, only takes something away. I appreciate your help. Your intentions were good, but I have learned that to change so much I have to forfeit who I am.

"As I lived through this winter season, I thought to myself how complex this change really was. The outside is where it began, but I felt like I would have to lose myself on the inside in order to be able to keep the masquerade going.

"I would need to change my attitudes and feelings until soon they were not mine at all, but rather attitudes and feelings of someone else. In the end, by changing

myself on the outside I would not be me on the inside, I would simply be an imitation of someone else.

"This winter taught me to be happy with who I am on the inside and leave the outside alone."

With that the woman in the market never said another word to the girl. She merely sold her goods and watched as she came and went.

The girl did quite well on her own.

Now this is one of the oldest messages in the world. But, for how many of us is this one of the oldest traps in the world as well? We are inundated everyday with messages for products that profess to hold the magic to our physical and emotional well-being. And there's just no escaping these messages.

But the truth of the matter is, no matter how much we toy with the externals, it's our insides that we need to bring honor to. Without the proper appreciation for who we are and what we are becoming, there's nothing that can free us from the shadows.

Much of the work we've done to this point has really focused on that very point. Awakening. Liberating. Honoring. Reclaiming. Transforming. All means at our disposal for one thing and one thing only.

Celebrating who we are, rather than abandoning our very essence. Claiming the Truth about ourselves rather than turning to prescriptions to bury that Truth. Embracing a path of forgiveness and acceptance rather than clinging to our critical and judgmental ways.

There's an important point to all of these experiences. To experience the sense of wonder and joy that lives within. But more importantly, these experiences and consequent feelings of joy and wonder can only be created by ourselves.

