

Look Who's Talking...

We've all heard that no matter how we try to avoid it we'll usually grow up to be just like our parents. In fact, we may even startle ourselves when we realize that we are saying the same things to our friends and children that our parents said to their friends and children. Odd, isn't it? It's amazing how powerful those childhood influences are.

What's really amazing is that most of our thoughts and emotional reactions to life events didn't originate with us. Most of the time we're playing old recordings of people that we knew as children. For instance, the position we take on topics such as politics, war, religion, economics, career, money and family are usually the same positions that we heard as children, or reactions to those positions. For instance, if your father was a Baptist minister, you probably have the same religious views as him, or views that are completely opposite. This is a fairly drastic example but many of our beliefs are either carbon copies of what we were given or complete opposites.

Now, why is all this important? Recognizing that we are the product of our early authority figures is important because we must realize that we are not responsible for most of how we think, feel and act. Have you ever felt exasperated with yourself because you can't seem to complete anything, or you can't seem to relax and enjoy life? Or maybe you wish you could manifest your higher aspirations but never seem to have the courage to do so? If there is a pattern like this that repeats in your life, chances are that the pattern is the result of values and beliefs that you took on as a child. Those are not your values – they are the values of your childhood authority figures (teachers, preachers, parents, older siblings).

Once you realize that most of your beliefs aren't your own, you also realize that it's not all that useful to kick yourself for behavior patterns that you didn't create. It's more useful to look at the behavior patterns and see who's talking. For instance, my husband used to wake up every morning feeling exhausted – sleep didn't seem to refresh him. When he began to look into it, he realized that he woke up every morning saying the exact phrase that his grandmother would say each morning when she woke up: "God, I'm so exhausted." In fact, he even heard the phrase in her exact voice! His grandmother had a number of ailments in her old age, and so would wake up exhausted each morning. As a young boy, Alan spent a lot of time with his grandmother and picked up many of her habits and thought patterns. Once he realized that he was reliving his grandmother's experience rather than living his own life, he stopped being exhausted every morning.

The next time you experience a thought or behavior pattern that is repetitive in your life, see if you can dig around the experience and find out who is really talking. You'll be amazed to find out that it's probably not you. It's more likely someone in your family, or a person you knew when you were growing up. Look back in your memories and sift through the phrases and ideas that you heard growing up, then see if you can match them up with the way you are now.

Then, the most important step in this whole process is to acknowledge that the voice that's speaking is not you. For instance, if you hear your father's voice telling you to "play it safe" every time

you want to take a big chance in your life, stop and say to yourself, "This is not I." Say it several times if you have to – your goal is to achieve some distance from that voice so that you recognize on a very deep gut level that the voice in your head does not belong to you. Each time you hear that voice and you reaffirm that you are not the one speaking, you will achieve more distance from it. Over time, these voices will affect you less and less. More importantly, you will begin to build your own values and beliefs based on your actual life experiences!