

Obsessive thinking:

Many of us were taught to approach life from a perspective of fear, survival, lack and scarcity. We were taught that life is about destinations, and that when we get to point X - be it marriage or college degree or fame and fortune or whatever - we will live happily ever after.

That is not the way life works. You know that by now, and probably threw out that fairy tale ending stuff a long time ago. But on some emotional level we keep looking for it because that is what the children in us were taught. We keep living life as if it is a dress rehearsal for "when our ship comes in." - for when we really start to live. For when we get that relationship, or accomplishment, or money that will make us okay, that will fix us.

The truth is that we do not need fixing. We are not broken. Life is not some kind of test, that if we fail, we will be punished. We are not human creatures who are being punished by an avenging god. We are not trapped in some kind of tragic place out of which we have to earn our way by doing the "right" things.

Healing ourselves and growing up allows us to feel clear about what is in front of us instead of torturing ourselves by obsessively thinking, trying to figure out what's right and what's wrong.

Obsessive thinking is an emotional defence creates problems for many of us. Being in our heads - thinking, fantasizing, ruminating - is a coping method we use to help us detach from things that a very often better dealt with straight on. It is problematic because it keeps us focused on the future or the past - we miss out on being alive today. It is problematic because our attempts to solve problems by ruminating about them causes us to generate more problems.

Worry is a reaction to fear of the unknown which creates more fear, which creates more worry, which creates more fear, etc. This fear is really not accurate or helpful because it becomes distorted and exaggerated. Obsessive worry is really a poisonous combination of a belief that we are failing in our responsibilities, and that we must measure our success in black and white terms. Usually our conclusion is that we have failed, are failing, or are going to fail and as a consequence we need to worry and ruminate on how we are going to get it right. Which in our minds we never do. This perpetuating, self destructive type of obsessive thinking feeds not only on fear, but on shaming ourselves for feeling the fear.

Starting to learn how to grow up and deal with the shame and sense of inadequacy that drives obsessiveness is a real challenge. Learning to be compassionate in our relationship with our self - by not shaming ourselves for being wounded human beings - will help us to take power away from the obsessive thinking.

Many of us grow up afraid of making a mistake, of doing life "wrong." We spend great amounts of energy trying to keep our human frailty a secret. We feel that, if we were perfect like we "should" be, we would not feel fear and confusion, and would have reached "happily ever after" by now. So, we shame ourselves for feeling fear,

which adds petrol to the fire that is driving us. The shame and fear that drive obsession becomes so painful and 'crazy making' that at some point we have to find some way to shut down our minds for a little while – with drink, food, sleep or television, etc.

It is a sad way to live. We are not capable of living for the moment and enjoying life because we are caught up in dramas about things that have not yet happened - or wallowing in self recrimination about the past, which can not be changed. So we do not really live life – we just survive and persevere.

It is impossible to see our self or life clearly when we are caught up in dramas that feel life threatening. In our obsessiveness, we are allowing the feelings of inadequacy to define and dictate our lives.

Getting into recovery from obsessive worry, starting to learn how to grow up, means taking power away from the fear and shame that drives the behaviour. Starting to choose to believe that one is good-enough, and does not need to be better than one is, will facilitate taking power away from the fear of the unknown. Love is the answer to obsession - but not the love of another person. Learning to be appreciative of our self is the best way to begin to eliminate obsessive thinking.

It is vital to change our relationship with our own emotions. The underlying reason that fear is given so much power is the shame about being human. One must be open to a larger perspective - awakening from being trapped in a limiting perspective. One must search for an awareness that is expansive and facilitates personal growth and start living life based upon remembering that we are as worthy and as good as anyone else. There is nothing left to prove.