

Reparenting

Breaking Childhood Behaviours and Building New Ones

Reparenting is when an adult works to meet their own emotional or physical needs that went unmet during childhood. These needs may include: affection, security, routines, structure, emotional regulation, and compassion. Many in addictions suffer from some form of these not being met.

Reparenting, a form of a therapy process, allows adults the opportunity to give themselves what they didn't have growing up. This often involves learning new, adaptive ways of being with themselves and others, as well as unlearning maladaptive behaviours.

One way to go through reparenting is to talk to your counsellor about it. Many are trained in the techniques to guide you through the reparenting process.

Self-Reparenting

Self-reparenting must be undertaken with caution, compassion and care. The process can awaken deep emotions and experiences from your past that can potentially be triggering.

Reparenting is a process that takes time and patience. Focus on understanding yourself and your patterns. Practice acceptance of these patterns. Gently alter these patterns until they improve.

1. **Self-Compassion** – An important aspect of reparenting is self-compassion. Remember, no one got to choose their parents. Focus on being gentle with yourself when you attempt to change what you were unable to control as a child.
2. **Respect Your Feelings** – Identifying, validating, and meeting your emotional needs is a difficult aspect of reparenting. We were often provided with limited emotional language as a child and we were taught to categorize emotions as good or bad. Remind yourself that all emotions are a necessary part of existing, regardless of how we feel about them. Emotions happen, it's how we respond to them that matters. (Refer to the Wheel of Emotions)
3. **Cling to Curiosity** – Reparenting is a continual process of understanding ourselves, relationships, and the world around us. Typically, we are not aware of the patterns that we developed as children. Instead of judging yourself, continue to stay curious as you look at your patterns with renewed clarity and accuracy. The better we see a problem, the more ability we have to understand and change it.
4. **Patience** – Remember to be patient with yourself. Our way of dealing with ourselves, relationships, and the world around us is stored in our subconscious mind. We often are not aware of the patterns that we developed as children. Remember, it took years to form these patterns and as a result, it takes time to build new and healthier ones.
5. **Strive for Consistency** – Our patterns are very tightly ingrained within us. It takes repeated intentionality to form new ones. When you identify a negative pattern you want to change, start by approaching them differently. Give yourself patience as it can take multiple attempts to make change. When you fall back into an old pattern, acknowledge it, and pickup where you left off. Change is not a linear approach.

6. **“Why”** - Reparenting can be a long and at times frustrating process. It is helpful to remember “Why” you want to make this change. This can be challenging and frustrating but with determination you will get there.
7. **Self-Discipline** – Structure and routine are important aspects of childhood that we carry into adulthood. Maybe we grew up in an environment that had little or no structure or routine. This can impact our boundary development in relationships, time management skills, performance levels, and impede emotional development. We have to learn that it's okay to tell others NO. The world is not perfect. We have to hold ourselves accountable in the reparenting process.
8. **Seek Joy** – Ever notice how children find joy in the world around them? They are full of awe and wonder. As we become an adult we lose this sense of joy. To successfully reparent, you have to tap into this again. Seek and embrace the things that bring you happiness. Be willing to explore new things that you've always wanted to try. Children are always willing to try something new, seek this out for yourself.
9. **Let Go of Blame** – Don't blame your parents. It's okay to examine how they treated you but remember they often did the best they could do with the knowledge they had. Remember, we did not come with a user's manual. Analyze what they did and learn from it. If you have children, the best thing you can do is change for their sake. Look at what you think your parents did wrong and address it within yourself to meet your needs. Letting go of blame will take a weight from your shoulders.
10. **Self-Care** – Reparenting is often draining and exhausting. Attend to your own emotional and physical needs so that you do not become run down. Self-care takes on many forms: setting healthy boundaries, disengage from toxic relationships, set aside time for yourself, attend to physical needs, and look at going to therapy.

Assess what behaviours you developed in childhood that you would like to change. Writing them down can be beneficial and is the start of the reparenting process.

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