

Dwelling vs. Processing: How to Move from Stagnation to Emotional Healing

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What is the difference between bringing up and dwelling on old painful memories versus processing the emotions associated with those memories for purposeful healing and self growth? Have you been aware that there is a difference? Many of us go through life strangulating our potential to achieve new levels of self acceptance and joy because we do not know how to differentiate emotional dwelling from emotional processing and we therefore rarely move into the realm of the latter.

If dwelling is characterized by attributes such as apathy, indifference, anger, feeling sorry for oneself, and being trapped in thoughts, then how do we transition into the nectar of life carried in the attributes of emotional processing such as acceptance, understanding, compassion, being able to feel feelings, and carving a path in life from our heart rather than only our head? In this article our purpose is to awaken to the differences between bringing painful issues up without healing-dwelling, versus bringing awareness to painful issues and truly processing and healing them with the intention to facilitate the realization of new levels of self love and genuine happiness.

DWELLING CONSCIOUSNESS

To be able to elevate ourselves from the depths of a dwelling consciousness into a processing consciousness, we will first learn to recognize what dwelling looks and feels like so we can know when we are there, which then offers us the alertness necessary to lift ourselves above it.

Passive Dwelling

When it comes to challenging issues we've encountered in the past it is common for many of us to say, "I don't want to talk about that, its over." Or "There is no point in bringing that up, it'll just cause me more pain." If we were to decode these types of phrases, the real message we would hear is, "If I were to think about these issues I would become aware of more emotional pain than I know how to truly process so I'd rather keep them in the dark." This leaves a person in a place of passive dwelling. We can often fool ourselves by thinking that if we don't talk about, think about, or feel anything about painful experiences than they aren't affecting us.

We can then see when in passive dwelling we essentially turn our backs to the painful issues we have because we don't know how to process them effectively, yet our emotional and physical health are profoundly influenced by the pain of those issues, even if we are in denial of it. Passive dwelling is when we never introspectively lift our rug to see what kind of crumbs have been swept under it. Through a lack of actual processing and healing we can be held back by our issues, disabling us to not be able to move forward to new self discoveries, hence we are in a place of dwelling-not moving.

A significant reason why we may find ourselves passively dwelling is because our instincts guide us away from pain, whether physical or emotional, for the purpose of survival and self preservation. The thought of allowing painful emotions to come to the surface when we have yet to learn how to safely process them, or have a coach who can guide us in doing so, feels like we would be swimming with the sharks! It seems pretty pointless and dangerous. Instead, if we could learn how to jump into the water to maximize the treasures and resources of the sea while safely swimming in harmony with the sharks, we would be lifting our foot off the brakes of self growth and healing.

Active Dwelling

In active dwelling we may be thinking about or discussing our painful issues, yet there is never any resolve breathed into them. Essentially we lift the rug to look at the crumbs, yet the crumbs just stay there no matter how much we look at them. One shape that active dwelling may take is in the case of someone who has secondary benefits from their painful issues. Perhaps this person had a painful childhood and they like to dwell on it actively to get others to feel sorry for them and so they can feel sorry for themselves.

Active dwelling can also take the shape of someone who wants to heal and process their issue, yet they approach the issue from an intellectual perspective rather than an emotional healing perspective. When this happens a person is talking about their issue while staying stuck in their head rather than leading from their heart. When we notice ourselves glued to a point of active dwelling perhaps we can consider; is it really possible to think our way into processing emotions? Or is it more likely that we can merely deceive ourselves into thinking that we can think our way into emotional processing when true emotional healing actually takes place when we learn to transcend the level of intellectualizing and embrace issues from our heart rather than our head?

Another important clue to help you and I recognize when we are in a place of active dwelling is noticing when we have anger towards another or when we are blaming someone else for our pain. Anger and blame towards others always lets us know that instead of owning the responsibility for our life perceptions, we are making someone else responsible for them. If we believe an external source is responsible for our experience of life, then we will automatically look external of self for a way to free ourselves from the pain of it, which will ultimately end fruitlessly. If your view is similar to my experience that suggests the only person who can heal you is you, then if we do not first take responsibility for creating our pain, will we ever discover our power to heal our pain? Simply noticing when anger and/or blame are happening is of critical importance if we want to escape the gravity of its dwelling.

PROCESSING CONSCIOUSNESS

When we are able to invite ourselves to reside at a level of emotional processing consciousness, not only can we look under the rug at our own crumbs, but we can sweep them up and take them out to the compost pile so they can help fertilize new growth. How can we begin upon this expansive path?

Living from the Heart

First we can reaffirm the necessity of experiencing life with our heart, rather than being trapped in our head, residing in thinking while being quarantined from our feelings. When living through our heart we are able to feel our feelings, both the hurtful and joyful. Why would we want to feel even our hurtful feelings instead of just acknowledging what feels good? One answer is that unless we acknowledge with heartfelt sensitivity the full spectrum of our emotions we will quickly abandon our heart center and take up full residence in our chaotic mind.

Meanwhile the emotion is sticking with us like a tumor, silently poisoning our energy field. It actually isn't the emotion that becomes a source of degeneration, but it is how we deal with or don't deal with the emotion that causes degeneration. The word "emotion" represents the concept of energy in motion. When we are feeling our feelings, the energy stays in motion and is processed in a healthful way, even though we may experience sadness, shame, or fear while it is in motion within. Despite the temporary pain, it will without a doubt dissipate if we allow ourselves to feel the emotion.

When we avoid feeling what we would judge as negative emotions, the energy does not stay in motion and stops becoming stuck in the body's energy system. Once stagnated, the energy metaphorically causes scum to accumulate much like would happen to stagnated water. The simplicity of living in our hearts where we

give ourselves permission to feel our feelings, which is much different than thinking about our feelings, is an essential propellant to allow processing and resolve of the given painful emotion.

Piercing the Surface Story

Most of the time we create stories which cover our real issues that need to be processed. We buy into our stories and often times we become our stories once we've invested a sense of self in them. For example, a person may have constantly been on the receiving end of being picked on throughout his childhood. He may easily become his story by saying "I'm the one they always picked on." His story will always deflect him from true processing and keep him in a state of dwelling until he can pierce through the surface of it. A key question we can always ask ourselves to help slice through the story is, "How do I feel about myself with this situation?" For our example case it might sound like "How do you feel about yourself having been picked on?" He might report back that he feels angry, sad, or fearful for example. Now we're beneath the surface into something of substance, as in this example what is painful isn't the literal events of having been picked on but it's the emotions the man has attached to the events that cause his discomfort. By piercing through the story where the person had been dwelling to discover his feelings and begin feeling his feelings he is now able to begin healing the pain of it.

Anger→Blame→Acceptance→Gratitude

As we discussed above, dwelling often involves projecting anger and blame towards another person. As one transitions into the healing realm of processing consciousness they will experience an embracing of first acceptance. Accepting the presence of hurtful emotions and accepting the literal events or situations that have occurred is a natural process as the resistance to them that has kept a person in a state of dwelling melts away. From acceptance our consciousness then elevates to a place of gratitude. Once here we can recognize the purpose of our pain and suffering while also beginning to embrace the lessons that are waiting to be learned from them.

Noticing where you reside on the anger→blame→acceptance→gratitude continuum in the present moment on a given issue can give you a sense of stability by giving you a point of reference.

Benefits of a Coach in Emotional Processing

Sometimes when processing our issues, using the assistance of an appropriate coach can prove to be helpful. The purpose of a coach in such cases isn't to climb

the mountain for us, but to offer us a sense of direction, safety and to offer different possibilities and methods of processing so that we can learn how to better coach ourselves.

Some issues may seem so overwhelmingly frightening that we're afraid to even begin to process on our own out of fear of being lost in the dark forever. A coach can provide guidance in a way that allows us to process at a pace that we can effectively handle while keeping a sense of safety. In other words, the coach helps us to take bites that we can chew and digest, rather than bites that are too big in too short of a time.

At times when we feel or think something within is off centered, but we can't put our finger on what it is, a skilled coach can provide a clean reflective surface to allow us to see what we otherwise haven't been seeing.

Strangely enough, my experience with myself and clients has been that one of the best times to enlist the services of a good coach is when we think everything is going well and is alignment. Usually we find ourselves to be in some level of denial about issues that need to be healed when we feel we are in a place of comfort!

Deciding if consulting a coach is right for you is a decision that can only be made by you. The above guidelines are simply considerations that you are invited to embrace. If the time comes when you decide to consult a coach for your emotional healing, you might wonder how to find the right coach for you. I would say that unfortunately finding the right coach for you isn't as easy as recommending that you look for a certain type of qualification or profession. Many people find that it is the person who is the coach, rather than their degrees, qualifications, job title, etc, that matters most in their healing process. Getting the names of coaches your friends or colleagues recommend and then interviewing the potential coach enables you to feel how you resonate, or not, with that potential coach while talking with them.

SUMMARY

As we have discussed, by acknowledging there is life beyond dwelling about our issues we can propel ourselves into growth by embracing the realm of emotional processing. We have first learned to recognize when we are either actively or passively dwelling about an issue. From this point we are able to step forward into emotional processing by agreeing to approach the issue from our heart, where we are able to feel our feelings about the issue. We then gain further depth into the

heartfelt realm by unmasking the deflection of our stories to discover what it is about ourselves we are feeling with regard to the issue. As we move forward on the infinite journey of growth we can acknowledge that we are our own best coach, and there may be times when we decide to consult an external coach who can offer new possibilities and guidance about how we coach ourselves.

As our unbounded processing and healing unfolds in the timeless moment of now we are given the gift of experiencing ourselves from a more compassionate, accepting, and joyful point of view.