

# FROM PAINFUL CHILDHOOD TO GENERATIVE ADULTHOOD

Becoming the Parents/Mentors/Elders  
We Wish We Had Had

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# Session 1

## Painful Childhood Relationships and the Foundations of Adult Emotional Life

This series of three lecture-discussion sessions has one key theme running throughout: the vital importance of adults understanding how childhood events provide the basis for adult emotional life.

The first session examines the foundations of adult emotional life in childhood.

The second session presents the ways those foundations work themselves out in the love relationships of adult men and women, in terms of both their difficulties and their opportunities.

The third session considers how the cycle is completed as adults deal with their unique responsibilities to provide better foundations for the next generation of children and others they mentor. Most adults, whether they have natural children or not, still have enormous opportunities to parent and to mentor, but how they respond to those opportunities has much to do with their own early experiences and how they understand them. Thus all adults need to think seriously about the dynamics of their special relationships with younger people in the context of their own early childhood experiences.

We begin with the childhood foundations of adult relationships. The difficulty of this material will come as no surprise to anyone who knows me well or has heard me talk on the subject before, but it can be disturbing to anyone not familiar with psychoanalysis, developmental psychology, or the various issues relating to the development of emotional abilities and capacities. I am in the habit of trying to speak the truth, however, even if it is a bit painful to my audience, and that is what I will be doing here.

We can start this painful process with the phrase “prisoner of childhood” borrowed from the original title of a classic work by Alice Miller later given the far less accurate title *The Drama of the Gifted Child*. We are all of us, to a person, prisoners of childhood, but why is that?

Now I always hold out the possibility that some people might have escaped childhood unscathed, but I have yet to meet one of them. So whenever I talk on this subject, I have to work from the assumption that neither I nor anyone in my audience has had very much experience with people who escaped childhood unscathed.

One of the most interesting things in how we treat childhood is how we clean it up, paint it up, fix it up, and romanticize it in direct proportion to the horror of its reality. We have all these fantasies about how wonderful childhood was.

Whenever I am counseling with someone, and I say “Tell me about your childhood,” it’s always a dead giveaway when they say to me, “Oh, I had a great childhood.” That makes me begin thinking to myself, “Okay, this is going to take a while!” It’s going to take a long time to get down to the truth about what really happened to this person in childhood. It’s going to take a long time to get through all the repressions, and all the defenses, and get in touch with the awful pain of what really happened.

The child, of course, comes into the world with a whole heart. The child comes wholeheartedly, with the capacity for emotionality intact. By this I mean the whole range of emotion, the whole spectrum. Children can hate with great vigor and they can love with full abandon. It takes awhile for us to destroy that free emotion so they won’t be able to feel so much. But adults are very good at breaking their children’s hearts.

So a child comes into the world wholeheartedly but then their heart gets broken. Almost every child’s heart gets broken. Why? It’s very simple. An unbroken child needs two whole parents who are not afraid of feeling, who do not respond to intense feelings defensively as if they’re going to be destroyed by them. Unfortunately, very few parents had that kind of parenting when they were children, so they are unable to turn and give it to their child.

Thus when a child encounters and seeks to express strong feelings they know are real, we may tell them something like, “You don’t feel that,” or “Good little boys and girls don’t feel that way.” In technical terms, we call this “crazy-making,” because in spite of what the parent says, the child knows the feeling is real. Children are inveterate truth tellers until we teach them to fabricate a false self in order to relate to us. They know when they’re being rejected, and of course, the parent doesn’t want to face the fact that they are rejecting the child, so they cover everything with something like, “Oh, I love you darling!”

But children know. They can feel that they’re being pushed away. They’re being hyper-criticized or stifled in some way. Children don’t understand why. They usually assume the parents must be right and the fault lies in the child. “It must be something I did wrong that is getting this negative response. I can’t figure out what it was, but it must have been my fault.”

We all have this inner child still within us, and when you get down to the deep levels you will find that inner child in there who still cannot figure out what they did that their love for the parent was rebuffed, or why they were under such emotional attack by the parent. When you get down to that level, it is very self-destructive, very self-hating. People have learned to feel that they do not deserve to be loved. Why?

Because “My mother and father would have loved me if I had been worth it. I don’t know why I wasn’t worth it, but whatever the reason, I wasn’t.”

This kind of thing goes on for the rest of a person’s life. The assumption that “I am not lovable” easily moves to the conclusion that “My love must be dangerous.”

Most adults have not been able to deal with their own exuberant love, so when a child has exuberant emotions toward the parent, they feel, “Oh, I can’t deal with this! This is too enthusiastic.” We distance the child away from us, feeling shame that we do not understand, and shutting down the child’s exuberant affection.

Now think how this influences the little child’s psyche, its emotions, its heart, its thinking. “There must be something wrong with my exuberant emotion, because it causes my parents to act embarrassed. It must be a shameful thing, so I have to protect people from it. I must not contaminate other people with this shameful thing in me that is my exuberant, joyful delight in them.” Just think about this, folks. It is horrible.

*Audience:* We have three children. Before you go on with this, **could you just give a little forgiveness to the parents?**

*Moore:* That is an important issue to raise, but I don’t think it’s really a question of forgiveness, because it seems to me the actions would have to be blameful to require that kind of moral forgiveness. The fact is that parents do their best. One of my axioms is that “All parents do their best.”

In a wider sense, I believe all human beings do their best emotionally. That is a hard thought, but think about it for a minute. That way of thinking changes a lot of pictures. It changes the way you reflect. I believe your parents loved you with all they had. They gave you all they could give you, and they can’t be morally blamed for not loving you better because what they brought to loving you was their own woundedness, their own broken hearts.

The more appropriate attitude for your parents, as well as for yourself, is compassion, and accepting the fact that you hate them anyway for the way they treated you. That is the compassion you need to have for yourself. Jung said it was one thing to love your neighbor but much harder to love the real you. The real you is the one that hates your parents for what they did to you.

We don’t have to be rational, because we’re human. When it comes to the life of the emotions, we are never rational. At one and the same time, we hate their guts and love them better than anything in the world. I very seldom find a person coming for analysis who is in touch with how much they love their parents, or how much they hate them. They usually have to get in touch with how much they hate them before they can experience how much they love them.

*Audience:* That sounds like it's hard.

*Moore:* Yes, it is.

*Audience:* I may dislike my parents, because there are areas where I simply don't agree with them, even now as an adult, but **is it right to call those disagreements "hate" for my parents?**

*Moore:* That is not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about things from childhood that are locked in the experiences of childhood. It's not the anger of disagreement. It's the young child's experience of rage for being rebuffed. You know, if the rejected children had access to the button, and could put their finger on it, they would blow up the world.

The sad thing is that this horrible disillusionment of the child gets built into the personality. Having to face the limitations of this world is disillusioning and enraging, and as we go on through life, we keep on encountering this world as it really is. But the rage of a young child is not domesticated and rational like adult anger when we say, "Well, I'm angry with you because of this or that," or "If you had done things differently, I wouldn't be angry with you."

No, childhood anger is much more hot. It's radioactive. It works like a nuclear reactor and has the same kind of emotional intensity. Our response to it is like our response to radiation: we put a lot of lead shielding around it and try to forget that it's there.

Where does it come out? It comes out in all sorts of bodily symptoms, things like migraine headaches, colitis, high blood pressure, automobile accidents, all of which the ego consciousness of the person totally disavows. I had a close friend who regularly had automobile accidents on the way home to visit his parents. He told me, "They were just accidents!" Right! No, anger there turned inward.

That is what the child always says. "I both love you and hate you, but the way I'm going to get you is to kill myself, because if you don't love me, I'd rather be dead anyway." Now listen to that: "If you don't love me, I'd rather be dead." That thinking shows intense feeling and real love.

Hans Christian Anderson told a story about a "snow queen" who froze people's hearts with showers of ice so they couldn't feel anything. With ice in their hearts they became very clever, very smart, very power-oriented, but they couldn't feel anything. It takes the love of a girl friend to release the boy from his imprisonment in the palace of the snow queen. He is frozen when his girl friend finds him, but she weeps, and the tears fall on him, the ice begins to melt, and he is liberated from the palace and able to go back to life as a feeling person.

Read that story when you get a chance, because it's a beautiful story, but notice it presents the image of a rejecting mother. Anderson didn't write a story about a "snow king," but perhaps we ought to make one up, because there are so many people who have frozen hearts not because of a snow queen but because of a snow king. The Cain-and-Abel story in the James Dean movie *East of Eden* (1955), for one example, shows us a snow king father who is only able to love one of his two sons.

These stories, and many others in mythology, folklore, and fairy tales, know well the image of "the wicked witch," which is at its core the image of a cold, withholding, rejecting, unloving mother.

Many folktales also have images of the father who is not a good father, the father who cannot be relied upon to do good things on behalf of the child. In the story of the Handless Maiden, the father makes a deal with devil to get something he feels he needs in exchange for giving the devil his daughter. Her hands get cut off, but the tears of weeping fall on the stumps of her arms and bring back her hands.

So we might say that within each person is a sort of Sleeping Beauty, a part of the person that has been put to sleep emotionally speaking, and stays frozen, enchanted, under a spell. The story of Sleeping Beauty is an image for this emotional anesthesia that comes upon almost everyone to some degree. It's really a matter of how much the heart is frozen, how defended we are emotionally against this.

These stories also show the power of the kiss, and the importance of someone taking initiative from the outside. It takes something from the outside to break the spell, to thaw the ice. It takes tears from the outside. It takes a kiss from the outside. I'm not saying it's impossible to rescue yourself from that place, but it's very difficult.

This is also a "true-self, false-self issue," a technical term in psychoanalysis that describes exactly what we're talking about. When a child is born, the true self that is the feeling self is intact, but repeated rejection and conditions of worth cause development of a false self, what I call "the android self." We use this phony robot self to deal with people when we really don't feel anything.

Everyone has one. If you pay close attention, you can tell when you put on your robot self, because you put it on automatic pilot in a conversation. A good place to watch is when you start getting bored in a conversation. When you start getting bored with the person you're talking to, you just begin to disappear emotionally. The real you is not there anymore. You put the android in. The android looks just like you, and it talks just like you, but there is a glaze in the eyes that is a dead giveaway. If you watch for it, you learn to notice when the android comes in.

For an extreme example of the android, see Arnold Schwarzenegger's movie *The Terminator* (1984) where he is a sophisticated android, totally devoid of feelings, a killer without a heart, programmed only to kill: competent, intelligent, and totally effective, but ruthless and implacable, a perfect example of the false self in people. Totally devoid

of feeling, the killer of other people's hearts. When you catch yourself wanting to yawn during a conversation, your false-self android is trying to come on line.

In parenting, that false-self android can destroy the heart of the child. The child comes up and says, "Look at me." But the android is present saying, "Yeah, yeah," and the child knows there is really no one there. In marriage, the spouse may not understand consciously what is wrong, but the unconscious can always spot the android. You look in those eyes and see a blank look that shows there's nobody there. This, of course, is terribly undermining of any future for the relationship.

This is a very sobering picture, but it is true. Once you understand this, you can understand why the planet is in the shape it's in, because this is planetary wide. That is why we stockpile nuclear weapons and itch to use them. It is a symbol for the rage that's carried in every mother's child and every father's child on this planet for the horrors that have happened to them emotionally in childhood.

Primitive peoples used ritual means to deflect this negative energy, but we have a continuing arms race, our version of the potential to act out the apocalypse. We now have the ritual means to discharge all this emotional pain, act out our rage, and pay everyone back for what they did to us. The repetition compulsion operates in peoples' lives. We unconsciously act out all this rage, especially when we can convince ourselves it is "justified."

This also explains why people do not feel more deeply about the suffering in this world. Just ask yourself this question: why do people not feel more? Why do we accept the glib answer, "Well, you know, I have to stay sane"? Or the answer, "You have to be professional about this and not get too involved." All of these defensive responses just cover up our incapacity to feel.

The planetary situation that spiritually awake people are concerned about is reflective of this emotional numbness. Without a significant increase in empathy, few of these world crises can be effectively addressed

They once asked the great theologian, Richard Niebuhr, what was the purpose of the church, and he said it was to increase the love of God and neighbor. The purpose of the church is to do all it can do to help people love better, loving themselves, their families, and the world in general. The purpose of the church is to thaw out frozen hearts, and once the heart begins to thaw, other things begin to change.

Our next session will examine the ramifications of these concepts for men and women in intimate relationships, and session 3 will consider our responsibilities to younger people. Now, however, we have time for some open discussion.

## DISCUSSION

*Audience:* If I heard you right, you and many of your peers believe that we are just itching to push the button and destroy our enemies. **I assume you were talking about us, because you used the word “we.”**

*Moore:* By which I mean “we” as human beings. You see, you have to ask yourself the question, “Why are human beings so interested in war?” Why do they love it so? They do love it. Not to face how much human beings love war is just to be totally naïve. You have to see the film *Apocalypse Now* (1979). Read the novels written by Viet Nam veterans about their war experiences. It will take the scales off your eyes about warfare. Something gets going in warfare that has nothing to do with national politics. It scratches an itch. It is stored-up, white-hot, radioactive rage that is leaking out, just like toxic waste. It is toxic waste.

Traditional tribes in history had ritual procedures for limiting warfare and they used ritual scapegoating to deal with these feelings. They chose someone and sacrificed them. When you study the history of warfare and human sacrifice on the small scale, you can see that they sought to ritualize aggression both to express it and to limit it.

The question is, “What do you do with your hate?” The problem is that you can’t just bury it. Trying to bury your hate is like trying to get rid of nuclear waste by putting it in a 50-gallon drum and dumping it into the Pacific Ocean, or the Atlantic Ocean, or dumping it off the Golden Gate Bridge like they used to do. All those 50-gallon drums of atomic waste dumped off the Golden Gate are still out there just waiting to start leaking.

*Audience:* Does competitive sports help?

*Moore:* Yes, it does. It helps a lot.

*Audience:* The passion in sports is immense between two rival teams.

*Moore:* Sports is very important for helping people bleed this stuff off. It doesn’t transform it, but it bleeds it off. It also enables parents to be sadistic with their children, especially their little boys, without admitting that they are. What some people do to little boys in the name of sports is nothing more than sadism acted out in socially sanctioned ways. But it is controlled, and that is a very important point. Sports are very important attempts to ritualize and control aggression.

Violent movies are also very important. That explains why so many people get off on Rambo. Why is Rambo so important? Because we all have a part of us that would like to be blowing folks away with an M-16 rifle! This is just a fact. We can’t get rid of it by splitting it off, and projecting it, and denying it. It’s there.

Christian faith is very interesting in this context. We distort a lot of our Christian faith because we think that Jesus would want us to deny this psychological reality. A lot of the time we split it off into the shadow and project it on all those “bad people” out there. That is what Christians have historically done.

In true Christianity, even though I’m full of hate, and I’m potentially a homicidal killer, Jesus loves me anyway. That’s the gospel message of grace. That is what the image of the love of Christ for all those outcasts is all about. For Christians, Jesus is the reality that loves us in spite of the virulence of our hate and makes it possible for us to see it and deal with it instead of acting it out unconsciously. We don’t need technical psychoanalytic language to know the Gospels teach there is nothing that is too horrible for Jesus to see. He does not avert his eyes. There is nothing that he will not look at. That is the eye that God brings to this part of us. My assumption is that for real healing to occur we have to look at these things that may not be pretty, but are very real in people’s lives nonetheless. They are an important part of our shadow.

*Audience:* From my personal experience, I have to wonder, **do most women express their rage in ideas of war and killing?**

*Other Audience:* No, they take it out on their husbands!

*Moore:* Women in general are not as likely to express their rage in direct physical aggression, but they use more passive means of aggression. Women major in passive aggression and verbal aggression.

This is an ancient and socially acceptable way of expressing aggression. The standard professional work on pathological personalities describes “passive aggressive” personality in terms that are highly represented in feminine circles (DSM IV, *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*). It is enormously powerful, but the power is denied, and the anger is denied, so I don’t have to deal with it. The common disavowal, “I didn’t mean anything.”

The comment about taking it out on husbands is accurate. Who better to take it out on than the husband and the children? We always take it out on those closest to us. But we are so “nice”, we may not even realize when we are doing it. The conscious mind, like the “heart” in the Bible, knows how to be really deceitful. The Reformed tradition in Christianity makes that very clear, and it’s substantiated by psychoanalysis. The conscious mind cleans things up so we can look better to ourselves and others than we really are.

We all do this, not just to ourselves, but to our spouses, our children, and our parents as well. We all find some way to pay our parents back. I very often hear clients finally dealing with their parents by saying, “Well, they weren’t there when I needed them, and now they want to have a better relationship, but I’m not going to do it!”

*Audience:* In reference to the rage, I took the Alice Miller book with me on a week-long retreat and it gave me a chance to mourn my own childhood. It was very powerful and very healing, but you have to work at this with a prayerful stance. Some of these things happened to us before we could think, before we even had language, so it's very hard to deal with.

*Moore:* Pre-verbal wounding. You are a brave soul taking that kind of material on a retreat. I know I can only read three pages at a time, because it's so painful I have to put it down. Alice Miller points out the need to mourn your childhood. You have to see the tragedy of it.

What is the tragedy of it? You need to get back in touch with how beautiful you were as a child and how whole your heart was as a child, and how much you loved those people, and what happened to get you to where you are now, broken as you are in your ability to love. We all do our best, of course, but if you're like me, you are hitting on about three cylinders most of the time in your heart, and that is the tragedy! Tragedy is something you can only weep about. You have to weep about it and let it be. The tears of grief thaw frozen hearts.

We compulsively, unconsciously try to avoid the tragedy by trying to get from everyone else what our parents didn't give us, but of course, that cannot happen. What we needed when we were two or three years old we could only receive when we were two or three years old. Once you miss that window, you can't go back and be two or three years old again. Our spouses can never be to us now what we needed when we were three years old, but usually, when we get married, we think they can. In adulthood those real needs can only be met in a serious relationship with a Transpersonal Other, a High Power.

*Audience:* If we can't bury our emotions, and we're depressed, **what is a healthy way to work with a child?**

*Moore:* We will look more into that in our final session, but for one thing, you should never try to tell a child what the child does or does not feel. So many parents tell a child, "You don't feel that," or "Good children don't feel that."

Parents also should never attack the child for the child's feelings. They can and should put boundaries around expression in order to limit acting-out behavior, but they should not moralize to the child about their feelings. Children should always be allowed to claim and feel their own feelings.

*Audience:* What if the child's feelings are hurting the child itself?

*Moore:* When the parent is concerned about the child's feelings hurting the child, it usually means the parent is having trouble handling those kinds of feelings themselves.

We experience ourselves as protecting the child, but usually we're protecting ourselves, because a child is very durable. We can attempt to soothe a child without denying what it is feeling.

*Audience:* Shouldn't you be afraid a child with feelings about death will do something harmful?

*Moore:* Yes, but there is an important distinction between limiting a child's potentially harmful behavior and attacking the reality of the child's feelings. Death feelings by themselves will not destroy the child.

*Audience:* We have to remember that God gave them for themselves.

*Moore:* That's right. That is the problem, because we all deal with our children in the context of ourselves. That's all we've got, and we are doing our best. The only thing that we can say about this is that there are certain things that you do. The famous English analyst D. W. Winnicott once said it is the task of the teenager to murder its parents, and it's the task of the parent not to retaliate. That can be generalized to childhood. That is to say, the task of the child is to be itself, and the task of the parent is to provide a holding environment that supports, sets, limits, and establishes boundaries, but does not moralize with the child about the feelings.

I see a lot of clients who were told what they should not feel, and what they did not feel, and were lied to by the parents about what the parents were feeling. It can drive you really crazy when parents keep saying with a hostile attitude, "I'm not angry with you!"

*Audience:* Isn't there **hope for the parents changing some of their wrong attitudes** by putting forth the time and effort to seek out relevant books and classes?

*Moore:* Sure, there is always hope, but we must be careful not to be naive about it. The fact is, this is rough stuff, and truth is really rough. We can work on it, of course. That is what everyone needs to do.

As persons of faith we can pray about it. I am convinced that the only thing that really helps is a sense of the reality represented for Christians in terms of Christ and the Holy Spirit. Jung talked about healing as an "encounter with the numinous," which was his term for the experience of God. You draw on your faith to help you fill in some of the areas where you were chopped up, and it also gives you support when you have to deal with the emotional storms that come from trying to deal with these issues.

I'm concerned that so many people pretend that they can stay on the shore. No one can avoid these storms. They are raging within whether you're aware of them or

not. If you are unaware of your pain and emotional conflicts, you unwittingly foster more dysfunction in your family and in your children.

So the resources of one's faith are very important. I am convinced that when you get down to facing all the sadness that comes from encountering your childhood, you do need a prayer life to help you deal with it. It also helps you start being more empathic and compassionate toward others, including your parents.

We will also look at some things you can give your children that won't cost you too much. You can give them your delight. You can start catching yourself when you see yourself failing to be delighted with them and communicating it. You can start communicating your delight to your children. That makes up for a lot of stuff. Your children need to know how much you enjoy them.



## Session 2

# Childhood Pain Expresses Itself in Difficult Adult Relationships

Our first session focused on understanding the wounding nature of our key childhood relationships. I gave you a rather bleak but true picture of the way it is. We also talked about why we adults try to repress all that kind of truth rather than face up to it. We try to close our eyes to the emotional realities on this planet which are so greatly influenced by the abuse of children and repeatedly passed on to new generations.

There is no way to understand the conditions on our planet without realizing how much wounding of children's souls occurs all over the world, from the ghettos of the west side to the ghettos of the north shore. Children are not safe anywhere in the world, and the results are patently obvious.

What happens to children is indeed a tragedy, but we compound our errors when we clean up tragedies, go into denial, and refuse to learn what they have to teach us. Someone told me you can't go back and change what happened in childhood, and I agree, absolutely not. But we should not let the tragic aspects of childhood abuse keep us from looking at the painful truth of what happened in our own childhoods and in the childhoods of millions of other people all over the world.

We all naturally want to believe that the earth is fair, and that childhood is always blessed, but the more carefully we study the emotional lives of children, the more we have to admit the fact that in reality childhood is not so blessed after all.

That doesn't mean healing is impossible. Healing is possible, and not only from the point of view of modern depth psychoanalysis. From the vantage point of the Christian faith, belief in healing is essential. In fact, I doubt if one could be a serious Christian without believing in the miraculous possibilities of healing.

But for healing to occur, you must have wounds, and when they heal, you will have scars. The wound is the reality of what happened, so you cannot deny the reality of what happened and still expect healing. You can never become the way you might have become if your childhood had been more blessed than it actually was. That is just a fact. That is just the way it is. But you can heal. You can move toward authentic wholeness.

Those who do not believe in the possibility of healing simply cut themselves off from the "Powers that Be," our Transpersonal Source, because they ignore the fact that the universe contains enormous powers of healing.

We are addressing that fascinating subject, adult intimate relationships between men and women, and some of the subtleties involved in that. We have limited time for such a complicated topic, but I have a few key points, and some resources to recommend, before we go to a general discussion.

First, we want to consider how this **childhood wounding complicates our relationships** with spouses, lovers, and so forth. If you were not mirrored adequately in childhood—and the chances are that you were not—what you will do, compulsively, is look for that mirroring from other people for the rest of your life. You will keep looking for that archetypal gleam in other people's eyes that you longed for but too often missed in the eyes of your own parents.

Now, as I have said, if you did get adequate mirroring, then let's celebrate the fact, but the chances are, you did not.

*Audience:* Can you define the term “mirroring”?

*Moore:* Yes, mirroring is the capacity of “good-enough parents” to get their minds off their own narcissistic needs so they can focus on the beautiful reality of this child that they have, and adore and bless that child without letting parental needs get in the way.

In point of fact, however, we all need tremendous amounts of that adoration, and we tended to receive very little of it at critical developmental times in childhood.

Take, for example, those times when we were the most exhibitionistic, early on, when we were the completely uninhibited Divine Child. “Look at my penis, Daddy!” “Look at my penis, Mother!” You know, “Isn't this wonderful!” How many parents can handle that situation well?

Very few parents know how to respond to the manifestation of the Divine Child very well, especially if they did not receive any such celebration when they were children. If your parents had a hard time really seeing your beauty as a child, then you will also have a hard time seeing your child's beauty when it most needs you to see it, hold it, and mirror it.

One time I was sitting with a couple of parents when their little three-year-old came in and said, “Dad, you know I'm going to have a B.M. so big that it's going to float down the Mississippi River and knock down all the bridges!”

The challenge here is to understand this child who is trying to feel its golden beauty and needs to be affirmed, not rejected. Parents must refrain from the urge to make an emotionally crippling response like, “Get out of here!” or “You're getting too big for your britches,” as if their most important job was to bring the child back down to earth. That is exactly what the child does not need at that particular point of extreme vulnerability and longing.

What might the father say in a more positive vein? Perhaps something like this, “Oh, you’re really feeling good today, aren’t you?”

The child, in other words, needs you to adore him. This is a young divinity manifesting here, and developmentally, that is the way it is supposed to be. To be adored and celebrated at that point by you without being attacked will integrate into the child’s personality, and later, when that child becomes an adult, he will have an adult’s good feeling about himself. He won’t, for instance, be as likely to be threatened by strong women or to idealize unworthy persons.

This kind of positive adoration doesn’t happen often enough, but the story captures the kind of attitude and approach to children that is required for it.

Two things happen to **people who didn’t get enough legitimate childhood adoration**. First, they may be embarrassed when they feel their beauty and greatness and try to hide it away. Second, when they run into someone who seems to adore them a little bit, their hunger for that adoration may cause them to pursue a relationship with that person no matter how much time it takes, no matter what the cost, no matter what damage it creates in the rest of their lives. They are always on a quest for adoration because they missed it so much in their early childhood.

Another possible result is a depressive personality that gives up on ever having anyone see them for what they are. Such people may be chronically depressed the rest of their lives, because no one ever really sees them and appreciates them. The longing is still there, but it is frozen and locked away in the unconscious.

All these things factor into our adult relationships. For example, how many problems between men and women come from the husband expecting mirroring from his wife that he did not get as a child? But she didn’t get it as a child either, of course, and so she’s expecting him to give her the mirroring that she didn’t get! And they don’t want to take turns! So you have two very hungry people at odds with each other and chronically disappointed in their relationship.

Once the initial honeymoon period is over, if there ever was one, the mutual sense of loss, and disappointment, and longing for acceptance and adoration returns. That’s what we mean in everyday mythology when we say, “The honeymoon is over!” The underlying dynamic in this is how we all expect spouses to provide us a mirroring “high” that they rarely know how to give. Because of childhood wounds they may not have it to give.

We must accept that no one will ever be able to re-parent you like you need it. I mean, that’s gone. The only way to get healing from your wounds is to grieve about them, and you start that process by admitting to the truth about your childhood. Face it, grieve about it, and then get on with your life. That’s why I recommend you read the books by Alice Miller that discuss all this material in more detail. However, that’s

only the bad news. Freudians often leave you there with only the admonition to mourn. Thank goodness they don't have the last word.

Here is the good news. From a Jungian point of view, **we are all wired internally for what we call "archetypal realities"** that can be understood and accessed to give us some of the healing and revivification we need. The archetypal perspective described here was founded by Carl Jung, but these phenomena can be described in the terms of many other schools of thought, including those of Freudian and Adlerian psychology.

One helpful way to approach these realities is to read Jean Bolen's book *Goddesses in Every Woman* (1984). Women should read it to start deepening their thinking about the feminine, and men should read it to deepen their thinking about the feminine.

If we had time, we could look into all of the metaphysical, theological, and philosophical ferment going on right now about the idea of the goddess, the feminine image in theology. We are in a radical revolutionary time in which feminist theologians are challenging patriarchal structures in theological imagery, that is to say, the exclusive dominance of masculine imagery in the Judeo-Christian tradition, but we don't have time to do that here. Let me just say it's a revolutionary time for understanding feminine images.

Either the feminine is on its way back in Christian theology, or Christianity is going to break under the strain, because the emotional and spiritual realities underlying the idea of the goddess are clearly being awakened around the world.

Clinically speaking, what does all this mean? Psychologically speaking, for every couple, there is a great man and a great woman within the personality of each person, regardless of whether there is any theological or metaphysical reality to it or not.

This greatness is like an emotional pantheon of the gods. If you study world religions, you find that almost every tradition, certainly the mystical traditions, have images of the Divine Reality in terms of a Divine Couple in a sacred marriage.

***Audience:*** Are you saying that **each person is somewhat androgynous?**

***Moore:*** Yes, at the archetypal level, you have that potential, but you must think about this as the potential human only. It is not actualized fully in anyone, though it may be actualized relatively well in some people. That process is what Jungian analysts call "individuation," picking up more of the fullness of the human potential.

Paradoxically, the more feminine a woman gets, the stronger she becomes, and the more capable she is of integrating her own masculine qualities. And vice versa, the stronger the man's masculinity, the more accepting of his own feminine qualities he becomes. It is like the rising tide that lifts all boats.

We need to realize that the human being is wired for enormously powerful and positive archetypal energies, and the reason we don't understand this, for most of us,

results from childhood experiences in which we did not find the right circuit breakers. The circuits are there, but the breakers were never clicked on so that we could feel their creative flow within us.

***Audience:*** Are you saying that feminism is the catalyst for development of both male and female?

***Moore:*** No, I don't believe that, but feminism is associated with a widening range of what femininity means that many women are picking up on in the world today. Women are beginning to see that femininity is far more rich and varied than a lot of cultural stereotypes would have both men and women believe.

Think about it like a piano keyboard. Individuals and particular cultures try to define the feminine in terms of one octave, even though the feminine in reality has a much wider range. In the same way, we have historically defined masculinity as one octave that misses the full range of the masculine. That which is called masculinity in patriarchal culture is really a stunted, truncated masculine not representing the fullness of optimal masculine selfhood.

If the parenting had been good enough, a lot of this richness in the child's human potential would have been welcomed, but given the culture, given the family system, given the personalities of the parents and their limited capabilities, usually only one octave gets invoked in any particular child. They still have all these rich archetypal potentials, all these innate codes for a richer life. Depending on how wounded they are, if they can recommit to their individuation process, they can still widen the range of notes that they can play in life.

We need to learn how this psychological metabolism works, how complicated it is, how dangerous it is, and yet how lovely it is at the same time. All of my work has focused on understanding and explaining these fundamental dynamics to men and women.

What happens in relationships between men and women is that we tend to equate the personality of our spouse with the octave that we feel most comfortable with, and this is also probably the one that they have felt the most comfortable with.

For example, if the man is an executive who unconsciously identifies with the king archetype, he may want to be king all the time. He may try to be king in the home, his castle, but there is a small problem with that! Most women want their man to be in touch with his king archetype, and they will be disappointed in him if he is not, but they also want romance, and it is very hard to have romantic feelings and love experiences with a man who is a king all the time. It not only can result in lousy sex, but it isn't long before some Lancelot comes along to help rescue the woman from her distress about her dominating bully of a husband.

The archetype of the lover is not the same as the archetype of the king. The man unconsciously hooked on the king archetype may not be very sensitive to other people's feelings, whether at home or at work, because he did not receive mirroring in childhood adequate to transform the unconscious inflation into a more healthy and related self-esteem.

I don't have time to go into all the psychoanalytic theory behind this, but the grandiose self would have transformed in a child if it had been mirrored properly and integrated so it could be emotionally related and regulated in a mature way. Really pompous and arrogant men usually did not get that mirroring in childhood, so they cannot relate well to others emotionally. They accept unconscious possession by the king archetype and lack empathy for other people's feelings. In a similar way, the archetypal queen in a woman can get easily offended when she does not get constant adoration.

What happens in so many relationships is that neither one of the persons realizes any responsibility to adore that archetypal reality in the other. The Hindu have a practice of greeting a person by saying, "Thou art God." Of course, theologically you may not agree with that, but psychologically it's true.

You have to look into the eyes of your spouse and realize you are talking to an archetypal pantheon in there, and some of those gods and goddesses within may be feeling a lack of respect! If you look at your spouse and you don't see the majesty, the beauty, and the fullness, and you start being bored with them, then some angry divinities inside there won't like it, and they will make their irritation known to you. This always happens when you start taking a life partner for granted.

Many marital squabbles are not fights between two human beings at all, because when the gods and the goddesses within get insulted, the human beings tend to disappear from view. You get a fight between the archetypal king and the archetypal queen. They're playing king and queen on the mountain, and they're saying, "You're not paying enough attention to me," and many times they are both saying the same thing. In a lot of knock-down, drag-out marital squabbles, you can't find the two human beings talking at all. You find two angry archetypal realities, like Zeus and Hera, slugging it out. It is no longer a man and a woman having a reasonable adult conversation.

**Audience:** You must be speaking of a pretty bad case. Isn't it **possible for a man to be a benevolent king?**

**Moore:** Yes, sir, it is, and that is the mature masculinity with a balanced development of the four archetypes of the king, the warrior, the magician, and the lover. The fully mature man is not possessed by any one of these. That requires a good relationship

with all these potentials within himself, but he must avoid any kind of one-sided possession by any one of them. A man overly possessed by the lover in him, for instance, might become an inflated, Don Juan type of personality, or a man possessed by the warrior may become one of those people who only know how to fight and fears intimacy more than a physical attack.

***Audience:*** Everything in moderation?

***Moore:*** Well, not exactly “everything in moderation,” but more accurately “everything in balance.” The problem with “everything in moderation” is that people tend to translate that into middle “C” and say to themselves, “Everyone is looking for this one note, and I’ve found it! So rather than using “everything in moderation,” I recommend just using “everything,” the whole keyboard, but striving for a dynamic balance. All the world’s spiritual traditions talk about this kind of balance as the fundamental requirement for optimal psychological and spiritual development.

***Audience:*** How would this apply to a marriage conflict?

***Moore:*** In other words, what should you do when a tense situation occurs in your marriage and things start escalating? I recommend that you ask yourself, “Do I want two human beings to talk, or do I want to have *Gotterdammerung*, the war of the gods?”

You simply cannot win by invoking the angry gods and goddesses. You have to honor those realities in the other person. You have to realize that all men and women have strong agendas, even though they may not have the personas of strong men or strong women. Knowing what we know about passive aggression, not all aggression is active openly; a lot of it is covert. People have all kinds of manipulative tactics they can use in warfare once marital cooperation has ceased.

There is much tragedy in these marriage conflicts because people cut each other off so much and fail to welcome each other into the world. If you were not welcomed as a child, it will be very hard for you to welcome others now as an adult, or let anyone welcome you.

So people often find themselves involved in a relationship with someone who is bored with them, and the cycle of disempowerment continues.

What is likely to happen if you get bored with your spouse, or begin to take them for granted? Someone else is likely to come along and see their divinity. Someone else will be able to see how beautiful they are. That is what happens time and time again and often results in extramarital affairs.

There, too, the person is usually aware of only one octave. So what happens? When you divorce this one and marry that one, you find you have the same range as you had before, but just playing it in a different key. I’m dead serious about this!

We all have a responsibility to develop our human potential. We have the story in the Gospels called the Parable of the Talents. So we all need to be good stewards of this full-range keyboard within us. There is not a single person anywhere who is not potentially far more powerful and creative than they have been able so far to realize, and we have been given the time for the development to occur. Like my Cajun forebears said, “Let the good times roll.”

Marriage has been called a vessel for individuation. Marriage can give both people encouragement to take seriously their wide range of potential and start asking themselves questions like this, “What box am I putting my spouse in?” “What would happen if my spouse started manifesting abilities that I’m nervous with?”

Everyone in a marriage must deal with the box their childhood experiences put them in, and the box that their spouse’s childhood experiences put them in. You deal with it first by looking at the experiences themselves, and then by asking, “How can we help each other get out of the box?”

Our goal for marriage, and our vision of its function, should be a relationship in which the wider ranges of human potential can be explored, celebrated, and actualized in both persons. Seeking this kind of empowerment will invoke the full richness of the masculine and feminine potential, and it can lead to much joy in both relationship and self-actualization.

This means that men who have not yet invoked the Aphrodite in their spouse need to become conscious of that fact and make changes in the way they relate to her. Women who do not see their spouse as a romantic Lancelot need to become conscious of that fact and even ask themselves what they might be doing to cause that, because usually these things result from some kind of an unconscious agreement between two people to stay in the same relational “rut.”

Many great writers and spiritual leaders have seen the tragedy of this situation, the enormous potential brightness, the enormous potential radiant fire within every man and every woman. The coals burn so dimly partly because we all have had so many wet blankets thrown on them from early in life, so we have a responsibility to each other to blow on those coals. We need to fan those flames to burn more brightly. That is what adult relationships should be about.

Session 3 will look at our responsibility to people younger than ourselves who need us to blow softly on their flames from time to time so they also can shine as radiantly as possible.

## DISCUSSION

*Audience:* You said a well mirrored man would not be threatened by a strong woman. By “strong woman,” do you mean a woman who has been well-mirrored?

*Moore:* Yes, either in childhood, or subsequently by other people able to see her value, and let her bloom, and become creatively assertive. That’s an important point, because women are only afraid of a strong husband when they have not known anyone who was both powerful and empowering.

*Audience:* Could it have been a mentor?

*Moore:* Yes, it could have been, and mentoring is an important subject I discuss in session 3. Our planet is starving right now for this kind of generative mentoring.

Relationships between strong men and strong women are not limited to physical love. They might, for instance, read stories to each other at night before they turn out the lights. A woman shows weakness if she cannot listen to her husband read some stories. A man shows weakness if he cannot accept his wife choosing to read from a book before going to sleep.

*Audience:* Would you describe more exactly what you mean by “mirroring.”

*Moore:* Okay, look, when we are first “coming out,” emerging as a child, the true self is our emotional self that can hate fully on one side and love fully on the other side. The experiences of both loving and hating work together in our emotional development. If you cannot experience the feelings of rage and hate, you likely cannot experience the feelings of love either. If you cannot feel your rage at your father for what he did to you, or your mother for what she did to you, it will be extremely hard for you ever to feel the fullness of your affection for them or to experience authentic forgiveness.

What you get so often is the “middle C” relationship between parents and their children. It is terribly painful for me to look at that, because of my work with clients like this. I can sit there with them and feel the anger and pain they have toward the father who failed to give them proper acknowledgement.

One young woman, for example, was deeply angry with her father for ignoring and rejecting her, but she was not able to face how angry she was, how much she would like to kill him. At the same time, I could feel how much she loved him, but she wouldn’t let herself feel it, because if she let herself feel how much she loved her dad it would be so painful that she couldn’t stand it.

Mirroring occurs in childhood when the parent welcomes the full range of the child’s feeling and zest for life and does not attack it or ignore it. Alice Miller’s book

*The Drama of the Gifted Child* lays all this out. The important thing is that parents need to be comfortable enough with their own beauty to be able to appreciate the beauty of their children, to nourish the prince and the princess within them.

Most of us, if someone comes up to us, a man or a woman, and says to us, “Do you know how beautiful you are?” we simply cannot deal with that! Why not? Why can’t we deal with that? Because we were failed as a child. If we hadn’t been failed as a child, we would already know that, accept it, take it for granted, and say, “Thank you, I love you too.”

**Audience:** Does the lack of childhood mirroring also cause the immature masculine tendencies?

**Moore:** Yes, it does, because originally the child is not limited. I realize that a lot of women are angry about how terribly women have been wounded by the masculine, but men also have been terribly wounded by immature males and females.

The reason men are not able to be more to their families, more to their businesses, more to their professions, and more to the planet in general, is because the masculine presences in their lives were not mature enough, were not full enough, did not model well enough the generative masculine.

When you find a man who takes delight in empowering other men and women, then take a closer look. There are not many of them yet, but they are around, and more are appearing around the world as men do their emotional work and find healing and masculine wholeness.

**Audience:** I don’t understand **the relationship between hating one’s parent and becoming a strong and mature adult.** If you hate them, how can feelings of love spring through that? Was the parent so awful that hatred was the only response available to the child?

**Moore:** That often happens, but if anyone on this earth does not have some bodily, visceral love for their parents, I haven’t found them yet. The expression of hatred is defensive, in my view, even if the parents were extremely immature, which a lot of them have been.

Sometimes I sit with people through years of analysis before we get down to the fact itself, the enormity of the pain. I remember a young woman whose father had been a flyer who impregnated her mother, abandoned her, and never married her. The young woman had spent her entire life trying to avoid having feelings about this father whom she had never met. She refused to face up to her feelings about who this man was, the fact that he had abandoned her mother, the fact that he had abandoned her.

Yet even with so many good reasons to hate this man, when she got down to the bottom of it, she found that she still longed for him. We're talking about blood and guts here, and bone and marrow. She longed for this man, and her longing for him was having serious repercussions in all the other areas of her life. To heal the wound she would have to face up to the full range of her feelings for him, the hatred as well as the love, and the love as well as the hatred. Only then could she grieve, forgive, and go on with her life

So my experience has overwhelmingly been that anytime you find the emotions of active hate, you have the possibility of a loving relationship. Boredom or indifference, on the other hand, do not have the same potential, and they are harder to break through.

*Audience:* I can see how emptiness and desire for completion could give you a sense of longing, but is it fair to call that longing "love"?

*Moore:* What you are describing is called the *eros* form of love, a longing for completion, and bodily desire. It is not the fullness of love.

*Audience:* Okay, but it seems to me that it is very difficult to love something you don't know. I mean, doesn't true love mean that you accept both sides?

*Moore:* Well, yes, but we seldom ever see that. When we love anyone in any situation, we have to love something that we don't completely know! How many people that you love do you really know?

*Eros* love is something different. *Eros* love is bodily love. I don't want to make too much out of this distinction, but the young woman spent a long time telling herself to be rational about this situation, telling herself, "I can't have any emotional investment in this man." But when we're talking about love psychoanalytically, we're talking about libidinal investment, an energetic investment of the heart. The young woman's heart was invested in her father. She was longing, not for some man in general, not for some abstract man, but for the specific man who had engendered her. She longed for him. That may not sound very rational, but it is a simple, observable fact. Today we call it "father hunger."

*Audience:* In such a case, wouldn't it be best for the woman if she could eventually find her father, meet him, and get acquainted with him?

*Moore:* That would be lovely.

*Audience:* Would that necessarily guarantee that they would go on and develop a fully loving relationship?

*Moore:* No, of course not, but she could still benefit from the experience of acknowledging the truth about herself. What is that truth? The truth is her deep emotional investment in his existence.

Truth heals. She could, for instance, say to him, “Why you blankety, blank, blank so-and-so! Why did you abandon me?!” She could try to force him to face up to this beautiful daughter that he threw away. She could force him to face up to his own Don Juan-ism, the immature man going around sowing his wild oats, refusing to take responsibility for his behavior. The true self speaks its Truth in a related way regardless of outcomes. We are responsible only for authentic offerings, not outcomes.

When we are talking about love, Christians have a problem, because we tend to make it all ethereal and abstract, when it has this other bodily dimension that comes from the heart and is more irrational. It often invests in people that we wouldn’t approve of.

*Audience:* I can see the value in acknowledging the tragedy of your childhood and grieving over that, whatever it may be composed of, but **how, specifically, do you acknowledge the tragedy? How do you grieve it?** Along with the value, I also see the risk of living too much in the past and blaming others. At some point you have to accept responsibility for your own life and the fact that you were not correctly potty-trained, or whatever, should not deter your ability to strive for goals that you want to reach. What guidelines do you set up for this?

*Moore:* Do you have a week to hear my answer?! It would take about 80 hours to deal fully with your questions, but let me respond briefly. They are excellent questions, but let me just point out some facts.

The fact is that the way you were potty-trained does influence your ability to set goals and strive for them. The fact is that not dealing with your past will condemn you to repeat it compulsively and unconsciously. The fact is that you cannot avoid the tragedy of your past because it continues to operate beneath the level of your consciousness, and the reason it does is that people don’t want to face the pain. People are scared to death of pain, and I have empathy for that.

People always exaggerate the negativity of pain, but the fact is that pain heals. Nothing can heal a person emotionally better than dealing with the pain that is already in the psyche and which they are trying to deny. When they face the pain, then they can grieve it, and turn it loose. Then they can go on with their life and seek healthier relatedness.

In my work I see a lot of people just going round and round, constantly trying unconsciously to re-do their childhood in the present. You can’t fail to notice the repetition pattern. Alice Miller explains this, how we always go in these repetitive

patterns. Any time you catch yourself in a pattern of repeating behavior where you always end up frustrated and down, you know you're in a repetition compulsion repeating something from the experience of your past. You cannot just let it be without facing the pain about it, doing your grief-work, and then seeking a fuller life.

In terms of guidelines, what you have to do is simply back off and get your observing ego going, and look at yourself, and you ask yourself a few questions. "How much joy do I have in my life?" and "Where is it?" All too often, if you ask these questions, you will not find much joy there, and that will tell you something about your life and your childhood that you can then begin to address.

People who were welcomed adequately into this universe will have considerable joy in their lives. I'm not talking about "perfectly welcomed," because there isn't any such thing, but I'm talking about "adequately welcomed." "Good enough," as Winnicott says.

But if you are flat, and if you find yourself bored a lot with other people, that is a mark of your woundedness. Boredom is a dead give-away of the wound I'm talking about, because it means you have shut your eyes to all the beauty in the people around you.

The way out of this predicament is to become conscious of it so that when you meet someone, you can ask yourself, "Am I going to let myself enjoy this person, or not?" "Am I going to let myself see the beauty in this person, or not?" "Am I going to let myself celebrate this person, or not?" "Am I going to let myself enjoy this part of my being, or not?" Then you can get it in the range of choice on a daily basis.

You would be surprised how much easier it is to enjoy your work, for example, simply by asking yourself, "Am I going to let myself enjoy this work today, or not?" If I'm not going to enjoy it, just let me say to myself, "Okay, I'm not going to enjoy any of this today."

*Audience:* You have described the true self, but what do you mean by "**the false self**"?

*Moore:* The false self is the self you developed in childhood to get the parent to give you as much as they could give you. In other words, if your mother was so wounded she hated your body, then you dutifully began to hate your body. She is not to be blamed. We need to understand that there is no blame here whatsoever, because this is an unconscious enchantment.

Parents cannot be blamed. Parents all do their best. That's the rule I go by. Every parent does their very best. Every person loves their best. It's a matter of what they can and cannot do. So it's not a matter of blaming.

The false self says, “Okay, mom, if you are able to give to me in this particular area, well, then, I’m going to focus on that area. If my eating spinach is what makes you love me, then I will eat my spinach.” It all depends on how strong the life force is in a child.

I know one woman who has been in a war with her parents from the beginning, but because she was strong, she said, “No, you’re going to give me more than that!” The parents know it is a war and they respond, “No, we are not going to love you like that!” But the child persists, “Yes, you are!” You would be surprised how much of this kind of emotional warfare goes on in a lot of families.

The sicker you are, the more you have lived your life out of a false self. That’s why I say that a lot of kids that parents think are the worst kids in the family may actually prove to be the healthiest, because the kid that will not totally destroy themselves to get your love is the healthiest kid in the family. The kid who can say, “Sorry, mom and dad, but I’m not going to do it your way” is probably the one whose true self is more intact than the others who seem more like “perfect” children.

*Audience:* You talked about playing in a certain octave, but when you said there was an unconscious ingredient, **was it the man or the woman** that put the man in a certain octave?

*Moore:* It’s mutual.

*Audience:* But if they are both aware they are not using the full range, **how can they break out of that?**

*Moore:* The first step is just talking about it. “Okay, what do we feel most comfortable with, and what is still missing from our lives?”

You have to realize that we have significant innate archetypal pressure to actualize all this human potential. Energy presses on us from within the unconscious to bring out all these things, and the more undomesticated a person is, the stronger that pressure will be.

So if you have limited your spouse by putting her in a box, both you and your spouse have important help down in there. The true self is lying dormant, and sooner or later someone will come along to help you bring it out. Someone will come along and say, “I see you, and you are beautiful.” It’s amazing how many dreary Walter Mittys there are in the world who all of a sudden become charming Cary Grants when the right woman comes along and notices how special they are.

*Audience:* Someone you are married to, or someone from the outside?

*Moore:* This archetypal press keeps on coming at you all the time, and if you do what needs to be done in a troubled relationship, you will soon start utilizing those

archetypal energies and saying to each other, “Come on out, I want to see you, show me who you are.”

*Audience:* But you both have to overcome the fear.

*Moore:* Exactly. It’s a mutual process, a mutual conscious agreement to see the beauty in each other. Many men, for example, think their women don’t really want them to be as strong as they potentially could be. This may be true because the women previously experienced assertive men as abusive men, or dominating men always stepping on them. So to them the only way to be safe with any man is to castrate him. This, of course, is totally untrue. A strong, mature man will not often abuse power, but if he regresses and does so, he will correct it as soon as he gets some feedback.

There is a little Caligula in every person, but the solution is still to notice the Divine Child. You see, I really do believe that welcoming a person works. We need to tell people, “Come on out!” If you can delight in other people, and love them with your eye, they can slowly emerge from hiding. They may, at first, be like deer at a water hole, listening apprehensively for any snap of a twig, so they can run like hell if necessary. But they test you, and if you are not someone with a big gun waiting to shoot them when they come out, they will eventually come on out, and you can take great joy in roaming the woods together.

This connects with our next session which will look into the responsibility we have for people younger than ourselves, including our children, but not limited to them. Adults have stewardship responsibility for the emotional resources they have access to. We all need to learn how to mediate those resources for the benefit of younger people who might benefit from our mentoring them in these emotional skills. You have more power than you realize to effect the lives of younger people, and make happen things for them that no one ever made happen for you. We’ll talk about that in our next session.



## Session 3

# Generative Adulthood Requires a Deeper Understanding of Painful Personality Dynamics

This session focuses on our responsibility as experienced elders to help guide and mentor those who are younger than we are, including our children, but not just our children. It is a long-standing tradition in human culture for the experienced elder members of a community to take real responsibility for the nurturance and growth of the emerging younger generations.

Virtually everyone listening to my presentations, or reading my books, is an elder already in some way, but our culture today is somewhat odd in that respect. We tend to see increasing age as a time of “retirement,” and that is very maladaptive in terms of the cycle of generations, because of the great continuing need the younger generations have for mentoring that can only come from older, more mature and experienced people.

Partly in review of the first two sessions, I want to discuss further **the concept of mirroring** that may be unfamiliar to many lay people, because it is an important part of this whole emotional process of mentoring others.

My use of the word “mentoring” is informed by the work of a very creative and famous Chicago psychoanalyst by the name of Heinz Kohut who died in 1981. He was probably the most influential analyst in the Chicago Institute for Psychoanalysis.

Kohut focused his attention on what we call “narcissistic wounding.” He came to believe that most psychological disorders resulted from a wounding of the healthy sense of self-love that should have developed in childhood. The child’s naturally emerging sense of power, beauty, and joy should not have been attacked or rejected by the parents but rather mirrored by them. That is, it should have been welcomed, celebrated, and reflected back to the child as a primary value and something the child could always count on the parents to support. The anger and rage that a child normally feels toward the limitations and conditions of human existence should not be ignored or rejected, but responded to by the parents with understanding and empathy.

Many people, unfortunately, did not get good-enough parenting, or good-enough nurturing, or a good-enough holding environment to develop the adequate sense of self-worth needed to maintain a satisfying, successful adult life. Under these adverse conditions of childhood, they sustain what Kohut called “narcissistic wounds” that plague them for the rest of their lives, simply because they did not receive adequate mirroring by their parents and other significant people in their early lives.

What is mirroring? I have come to call it “the Eye of Blessing,” the gleam in the eye of a parent or emotionally significant older person, who looks at you in a manner that you can tell they are really looking at you, not at some other image they might want to see. Children are uncannily knowledgeable about the difference. They know when the parent or other older person is seeing them, and when they are seeing something else. Mirroring, in other words, is not something passive, even though it may sound like it is.

*Audience:* When it’s your own children, it is really hard to step back and see all this.

*Moore:* It’s hard to do in any case. That’s why so few parents get it, because it is really difficult. The more wounded the parents were in childhood, and the less celebrative they feel about their own true selves, then the more they will try to use their children to compensate for what they did not get for themselves. This usually leads to mutual chronic disappointment. Most problems between parents and their children are exacerbated by the parents’ feelings of inadequacy.

It is intriguing how easy it is to hurt the feelings of parents who are supposedly mature people. What is the easiest way? Perceived lack of mirroring from a child. They just assume it is the child’s job to mirror the parents and give them what they need to feel good about themselves. That is crazy, of course, just the opposite of what family life should be about, because it should not be the child’s job to mirror the parents.

Anytime you have parents, however, who are emotionally children, the child will immediately and intuitively start trying to parent them. Inside every child is a natural therapist, and you can understand why. They intuit that “If I expect to get anything from this person, I’m going to have to heal them first! I need to make them feel better, or they won’t be able to give me anything emotionally.” So they start trying it.

In analysis, we call this process “transference” and “counter-transference,” because all analysts, like inadequate parents, still have their own crazy parts, and the clients always realize this, and they always try to make the analyst get better for the same reason. The child in the client tries to heal the parent in the analyst so the analyst can do a better job of parenting them. That’s the way it works, and it’s probably always going to be that way to some degree.

We need to understand these processes because they have great power in the mentoring relationships we have with younger people. Perhaps the key litmus tests for detecting immature people masquerading as mature people around children is the extent to which they focus on having the younger people mirror and/or idealize them all the time. This is true in the church as well as in the family, or in business, or anywhere else one works with people.

To understand a person emotionally, you have to notice which way they expect the emotional flow to go in their relationships with other people. An older person who expects to be adored and mirrored all the time is not really old at all psychologically, but is in fact a very hungry and needy child. We all have that need, of course, but the task of becoming a mature human being in life is to get that hunger under control and get conscious about it, so we don't constantly act it out.

*Audience:* What do you mean by “act it out”?

*Moore:* “Acting out” is a clinical term for people doing things without knowing why they are doing them. It means unaware, unconscious behavior.

We all need that “eye of blessing” from older persons, parents, or parent-surrogates, and this is not a passive activity. There has to be a real twinkle in the eye. There has to be some enthusiasm. People who need mirroring need to feel that you have an active interest in them as individuals.

Kohut also described another form of transference known as **idealization**, which refers to two different directions of powerful emotional projection between the child and the parent, between the client and the analyst, or between the mentee and the mentor.

a. Anytime you mirror a child, you idealize them in a positive way. When you look at them, you have a choice. You can focus on their shortcomings, and where they have let you down, or you can shift the focus slightly, without ignoring their shortcomings, but seeing also their promise. You can see their potential and focus your attention on what they can become, what they have it in them to be for their family, for their work, for the world, and so forth. In this form of positive idealization, you see them as they might become with the right kind of nurture. You realize that the child is not yet everything even a child can be, but you still take delight in them just for their sheer zest and energy.

b. Idealization also occurs in the other direction. Children looking at you not only need to be mirrored by you but they also need to be able to idealize you. They need to be able to see the great person in you. This presents a problem, however, if you never did have the great person within you celebrated when you were a child. So you are likely to be uncomfortable when younger people start seeing the great person in you. You may respond by saying, “Don't say that. I'm not really like that. I'm not that good. It's nothing.” We squirm, in other words, because we can't deal with the positive affirmation encompassed in that idealization.

My rule is never to flatter anyone, because the unconscious of the other person always knows when you are lying, but I do make it a practice to tell the truth when I know something good, promising, or worthy of celebration in a person. It is interesting

to watch people squirm when you tell them true, good things about themselves. This comes from their lack of mirroring in childhood. Most people cannot stand to have their own beauty or greatness seen. It really makes them anxious.

That child or younger person using you as a mentor needs to be able to idealize you in order to grow, so we shouldn't slap it down. Suppose, for example, that you are a parent who was in the Korean War but spent all your time in a quartermaster unit, and never saw any action. When your son discovers your military patches and begins to idealize you as a war hero, you should not disabuse him of that idea. He will knock you off your throne in due time, but he should not have his idealizing illusions taken away from him before he is ready to have them taken away.

This process might seem dishonest and illusory to some, but it is an illusion sorely needed by the soul of every child or younger person at a certain point in development. Our job as adults is to carry that idealization for them for as long as they need for us to carry it.

Thus mirroring involves two kinds of idealization. If I'm a young person, I need for you to mirror me, and I need for you to let me idealize you. Both of them build up my own true self inside. My growth is cut off in both cases: (a) when I don't get mirroring from you, and (b) when you don't let me idealize you, or put you on a pedestal temporarily.

Think now about how a pattern of withholding mirroring and idealization between older persons and younger persons can work destruction in families and work settings. Families often get into "standoffs in relationships," a technical phrase from theory that analyzes relationships in terms of an interpersonal field, by which we mean the typical processes or patterns of interaction among people. When two or more people get caught up in their craziness, we call it a "complex discharging field."

Consider, for example, the daughter who always wanted her father's blessing, while he always wanted her to give him her blessing. So you have two children in conflict. The father may be 60 years old and look to the daughter like king of the mountain, but within himself he feels like a little boy with hurt feelings because this daughter does not seem to treat him with appropriate respect. She views him as a person who can never give her anything because he's holding out on her until she totally caves in and becomes an obedient daughter. This may go on for years until the father dies, and neither one of them can break out of it. This is just one example.

If you look at examples of this withholding pattern between people in families and at work, you will notice that it comes in recognizable patterns and tends to be structured in just a limited number of ways. You can pick them out. People usually get locked into this behavior because the older person, without realizing it, wants to be nurtured, wants to be parented, wants to be the child.

It is enormously important for us to start understanding again the stewardship of being an elder, because it is our job to become conscious of, and deal with, our feelings of vulnerability and woundedness in our own inner child so we don't continue looking for the parents' gleam from the eyes of our own children, or from the eyes of those people younger than us in our businesses, our work places, or in our church.

We have a responsibility that we cannot meet if we don't start understanding what it is that we often try to get from younger people that is not appropriate for us to ask. We call that "reversal." Behind these destructive patterns between parents and children, and between mentors and people working under them, it's almost always a reversal phenomenon.

We can talk about examples of this, but we need to become very conscious of it in all our relationships, and we need especially to stop asking younger people to be our mothers and dads. It's not good for anybody when we do that.

Finally, we need to understand the importance of becoming more expressive of our delight in others, and this is particularly true when we are in the position of being an elder. That's what a blessing is. We need to become artists of blessing. We need to stop adhering to one erroneous concept that we have come to believe, that blessing is a scarce item, and if you give it away you might run out.

It is somewhat like the idea people have about love, that love is so scarce, you should be careful about giving it away or there may not be any left. I have to be real stingy with it. I'm just going to guard it carefully because I've just got a short supply. It's like a zero sum game: if I give this child some love, the other child has to get less. Kids often think that way. Anything that sister gets is something taken away from what I can get, and so forth and so on, and, of course, that's just craziness, because that is not the way it is.

The Christian faith has tried to characterize the true situation by the bounty of God's grace, the image we sometimes see in the cornucopia just pouring forth bounty and abundant life. This is an archetypal image of the reality of this grace. Christmas time is coming up soon. The flow of presents, beautiful things, all of this richness, lavishness, and bounty around the tree is an archetypal image. This is all about love.

Yet we all commit the error of thinking you can only have that sort of feeling at Christmas time. Again, the assumption of scarcity. "Well, it's just Christmas, so back to the depression!"

The reality is that the more love you give, the more you have to give, and the more delight you take in people, the more delightful they seem to you, and the more delight and joy you experience. The more you allow yourself to see people's beauty, the more beauty you will see everywhere. It is not a zero sum game. It feeds on itself and grows, and that is the truth, contrary to this sense of scarcity that most of us grew up with unless we were very lucky.

Most people are stingy with their expressions of love, delight, and adoration of other people. If you are a person who does not hold back these expressions, then I celebrate you, because you are doing wonderful things for the people around you. Sadly, however, most of us really do hold them back.

I suggest you start looking at your relationships in and out of the family and see whether you are giving as many bouquets as you could legitimately give. I'm not talking about flattery, because I do not recommend that you ever flatter anyone. But are you verbalizing your legitimate appreciation of others? Are you verbalizing your celebrative feelings of what they have done, especially in small things?

It is just amazing, and tragic, to look inside families and see how enormously non-celebrative they are of each other. It just kills the soul of everyone in the family. If you want a guideline or a rule, whenever you're in doubt, try to err a little bit on the side of being too celebrative, especially toward the ones that are younger than you.

The upcoming Thanksgiving and holiday season will give us lots of opportunities to work on these things. We don't want to live this way only in the holiday season, of course, but it's a wonderful time to start working on it, because if you don't, you're even more likely to get depressed.

One reason people get so depressed during the holidays is because they start becoming more aware of all these issues we've been talking about. They start smelling all the lies and mutual withholding in the family. Every family has its own lies. People say something out loud that is acceptable, but then they keep to themselves the rest of the sentence that they are thinking in their minds. For example,

"Well, I do love you." Then under my breath, "but I never want to show it."

"I love you, mom." Then, "But I can't take you in my arms and hold you until you stop squirming."

"I love you, dad." Then, "In spite of the fact that I hate your guts!" (You just aren't going to say anything like that to dear old dad, so this is a struggle you never can win.)

"I want you to know you are so beautiful." Then, "Sometimes it hurts me so much, but I want us to be okay with each other."

It doesn't cost a thing to face up to these extra things and say them, but we seldom do. Parents are allowed to die, to go to their grave, and then those of us who are clergy persons must listen to the children grieving about never having said it!

The only solution is for all of us to look at people more and talk with people more. Notice the eye, and the lack of eye contact. Pay attention to the lack of eye contact in families, how we use the television "idiot box" to avoid any interest in each other. The television comes in very handy for this, because it makes it acceptable not to ever look at each other's eyes. If someone does venture to share a feeling, then its "Shhhhh, shhhh, shhhh."

Now let's stop for discussion of your comments and questions.

## DISCUSSION

*Audience:* What do you say about **the spoiled child** who has been overly celebrated and adored?

*Moore:* Well, personally, I don't believe in the concept of spoiling. It's not only erroneous, but very misleading, because normally that kind of false adoration does not focus on the real child at all. The parent projects onto that real child the ideally perfect child that they want or need them to be, and then they adore that image of the perfect child so much that other people see a "spoiled child," but the child doesn't feel seen at all.

The parent ends up doing things for the child that the child should do for themselves. The whole process cripples the child, because it does not allow the natural development of the child's real abilities. The child's capacity to deal with frustrations and ambiguity remains immature, and we come along and say, "They're spoiled." Any sign of a problem, and this parent rushes in to tell the child, "Oh, that's all right." In other words, "You don't really feel that upset." But, of course, the child *does* feel that upset, and it *isn't* all right. The child needs to be mentioned in problem-solving behaviors in the face of difficulties and challenges.

What we call "spoiling the child" is really a spoiling of the parent. The parent cannot tolerate the child engaging in real life and real feelings, so they work on protecting the child from the child's disappointments and emotions, which is a very poor idea from the standpoint of the child. It certainly doesn't benefit the child. These parents do too much for the child because they can't stand for the child to face the real world. That is what we mean by "spoiling." It really cripples the child, and puts them at a severe disadvantage in later life, because you cannot keep the difficulties of life away from the child forever.

*Audience:* Does spoiling occur for the same reason as the lack of mirroring?

*Moore:* Yes, it does. When parents feel bad about themselves, they sometimes try to make it all up through the child, and the phenomenon we call "spoiling the child" is one expression of that. Adults sometimes try to make up for their own deficits by making the child's life perfect and living vicariously through the child. This is impossible, because the real life of the child is not perfect and never can be. For one thing, the real life of the child consists of having to deal with you, and that isn't perfect by definition! It is very disappointing, in fact, because like the rest of us, you are sometimes very disappointing yourself, so that the child becomes very frustrated—that frustration is real, and the child must learn to cope with it.

The more we try to protect our children from intense negative feelings and disappointments, the more we are really trying to work out our own emotional issues, our own need to repair the disappointments of our own childhood.

Our task, however, is to constructively help that child cope with the imperfect everyday realities that no one can avoid for long. Children need to feel loved and be able to count on our presence, stability, and support while they work their own way through their various issues, disappointments, and pain. Then they can get stronger and stronger as they learn how to deal with life effectively.

That is one rule. Never to do for a child what the child can do for itself.

*Audience:* Why does a parent choose to spoil one child rather than another? What determines the pattern? Why don't all the children reflect the same lack of parental access?

*Moore:* It is hard to make a blanket statement about that, but a parent's personality is very complex, usually much more complex than they realize. Many times the parent will project different parts of their personality upon different children. These children then become containers for various unconscious aspects of the parent's personality in ways that neither the parent nor the children are fully aware of.

A father, for example, who is not aware of his desire to run off to the South Sea Islands with a beautiful woman may unconsciously try to turn his own daughter into the kind of woman who would try to lure men into running off with her to the South Sea Islands. Yet at the same time, he will feel personally insulted by any indication of immorality that comes from her. She is carrying around an important part of his personality that he himself is totally unaware of. Mothers, of course, do the same kind of thing.

This complicates our understanding of families, because each family has a different pattern. The chemistry is different. The different children can carry different parts of the unconscious projections of the parents. One of them may carry the fun-loving part, while another carries the ambitious part that wants to earn several degrees and become a successful professional. Others will carry other parts. The children have been unconsciously forced into living out the fantasies of the parents.

That's why it's so important for parents to get more conscious, so the children won't be condemned for the rest of their lives to live out the unfulfilled fantasies of the parents.

*Audience:* How does **discipline** fit into this picture of caring for the child's feelings?

*Moore:* Discipline fits in very closely by providing appropriate containment. But discipline must never be retaliatory or indicate rejection of the child. Unfortunately,

much parental discipline is retaliatory, resulting mainly from the parent's own hurt feelings and inability to respect the child and mirror the child in a proper way.

Wise parental discipline sets firm boundaries and is not retaliatory. Parents must be secure about their own self-worth. If they're looking for the child's obedience to confirm their own self worth, then the discipline will always be retaliatory, under the guise of being for the child's own good. Look at Alice Miller's book *For Your Own Good* for a deeper understanding about that.

These principles apply in areas far outside the home. I see graduate school professors who are supposedly mentors of graduate students, doing the same thing. If you are a graduate student, you and I need to talk! You have protect yourself from narcissistic immature advisors. But it's the same dynamic. What many people consider appropriate discipline "for the good of the child" is really just emotional retaliation against the child who does not seem to be properly mirroring the parent or teacher.

*Audience:* We have three children, and one of my biggest insecurities about raising them properly is **my fear that somehow I might mess up their minds**. Even going to parent effectiveness training classes, we read and discuss all kinds of ways you can do great harm. Like losing your temper, for instance. Is there any way to gauge things like that? How can you actually look at your children, and say, "Maybe you're doing an good job," or "Something is actually working correctly"?

*Moore:* Parent effectiveness classes are very good, and very useful, and I support them and all the other kinds of family education available today, but don't get into a mind-set where you are always grading yourself on how well you are doing. That's a mistake, because then it becomes too much like a classroom exercise: "Let's see now, how am I doing here?" The goal goes far beyond that level, because we need to keep asking ourselves such questions as, "Am I learning how to take delight in my children?" and "Am I learning better how to express that delight?"

Losing your temper is not the main problem. The British psychoanalyst D. W. Winnicott even wrote articles on the importance of hate emotions in the analytic relationship. Hate is real, but more destructive than hate is boredom, indifference, or rejecting the relationship altogether. Losing your temper with your children is not always such a destructive thing.

The more important question is, "What do they hear when you lose your temper?" Children can always sense what is behind it. Is your expression of anger an attempt to destroy them, and grind their bones to dust, and totally kill the life in them? Sometimes parental anger is just that.

Or does your anger represent your sincere attempt to connect with them in a more loving and supportive way? Does it mean you are trying to engage them and show them

how much you really do care about them? Perhaps you got impatient because you want more communication from them than you are getting, not less. Most children will understand when you say, "I'm not nonchalant about this! I'm serious about this!" Children, in fact, sometimes provoke your anger just to feel your emotional presence. It may be the only way they know how to get close enough to feel your warmth.

*Audience:* What about **genetics**? Isn't some of the child's behavior inherited? Is everything that happens to your children your own fault because you didn't respond to them right, or you didn't treat them right?

*Moore:* No, of course not, but a significant amount of what happens to our children is our fault, so that, by comparison, any attempt to emphasize the genetic aspect is often just another way of letting ourselves off the hook too easily so that we don't have to do our own emotional work.

Yes, the capacity for effective relationships does indeed have a genetic component, and yes, other things outside the family can indeed happen to our children to disrupt their normal development. Perhaps they run into the wrong first-grade teacher. Perhaps they get the wrong kind of peer influence. Perhaps unusual events take place that influence them, and so forth.

But in my experience, most parents faced with unwanted childhood behavior are all too ready to cop out and leap to one of these other possible explanations rather than face the more difficult fact that they are unconsciously living out their own emotional issues in the lives of their children, and what they really want is to get adoration and parenting from the child. As I said before, it should not be the task of the children to provide parenting for the parents. It should be the task of the parents to provide parenting for the children and get their own mirroring somewhere else, whether in a spiritual community, an interpersonal growth group, or in psychotherapy.

*Audience:* But **can't you also destroy yourself by blaming yourself** all the time and thinking, "It's all my fault. What did we do wrong?" Like you said, everyone does their best.

*Moore:* Yes, I agree, and that's why my axiom is "Parents do their best." But that doesn't mean that parents are not responsible for becoming as conscious as possible about these personality dynamics so they can recognize the kinds of challenges that parenting includes.

As for repairing any damage that's been done, you still have lots of time if your children are only 35 years old. As long as you are still breathing, you can say to your child, "I did my best, but now I realize such and such about what I did to you, and I want you to know that I'm really sorry about that. I know I can't make it up to you,

but I still want you to know how much I love you, and I want us to be close now.” And so forth and so on.

It’s amazing how few parents are willing to reach out to that adult child, and it’s usually nothing in the world but pride. “I’m not going to admit to what I did to these kids. I’m just not going to do it!” So we have to deal with that. In fact, if you want a summary of what most often gets in the way of good parent-child relationships, it is almost always the hurt pride and hurt feelings of the parents and their unwillingness to express regret and ask for forgiveness.

You can see why this is so, because anyone expecting to get mirroring from a child will invariably get hurt, simply because the child is also immature. Don’t expect a child to be a good mommy or daddy to its parents. It will sacrifice its own needs to try, of course, but if it could do so, it would no longer be a child.

*Audience:* You mentioned **deficits** that an elder might still hold. Could you discuss some healthy, appropriate ways to correct those shortcomings?

*Moore:* There are many ways to work on that. The first thing, of course, is just to get more psychologically and emotionally conscious about the problem. We all have to stop lying to ourselves about these deficits. We have to realize that human beings are resilient. We can take a lot. Mature human beings have the ability to face the way things really are without collapsing in the face of them. The desire to deny everything and avoid facing the truth is a mark of immaturity.

So if we can simply admit to the pain of our childhood, that is going a long way forward toward dealing with it and correcting it. Just admit it to ourselves, because then we no longer will have to enforce these debilitating deceptions on ourselves and everyone else around us.

We have many other ways today, including therapy, for becoming aware of the inner child. You can learn a lot by reading things like Dr. Hugh Missildine’s book *Your Inner Child of the Past* (1963). Popular psychology and self-help books get a lot of criticism, but you can gain a lot of awareness by reading books that describe patterns of woundedness in the inner child. John Bradshaw’s work is also very helpful in this regard.

Your spiritual life can also help, because it is easier to acknowledge a lot of these deficits if you have some sense of security in a Higher Power that you can rely on. That is where your faith community comes in. Even when you lean on an analyst or a therapist, we call that archetypal transference, because in a sense, the therapist becomes the means by which the Divine Reality urges you to face up to the truth about things, and be a more loving person.

The image of Jesus is a key concept here. What do we know about Jesus? Jesus looked at things no one else would look at. He looked at the truth in situations. That is an important mark of full maturity, to look at the horror of people's lives, and yet still love them. You cannot be Jesus Christ, of course, and if you get into too much of an identification, that's crazy, and that doesn't help. But you can get in touch with the spiritual reality that Christ represents, and that can help you be able to look at the truth about your life without collapsing. It can make you wise, and that's the goal.

We also talk about Sophia, or Wisdom. In an Ibsen play, the king says to the fool, "Fool, how did you get so wise?" The fool replies, "Pain, my lord, pain." You cannot face the truth and the pain that comes with it without a real sense that there is a Divine Reality that supports you when you look at the truth. That is where my own faith is.

There are many things one can do, reading, study, prayer, joining a spiritual community, and analysis. In any case, the mark of a mature person is the willingness to look at how things really are and still be in touch with the life forces that we associate with Divine Reality. You don't have to clean it up, split it off, deny it, or repress it, but you do have to accept it. You have to develop the capacity to say, "Nevertheless." You have to develop the capacity to dance in the face of all this pain. All of this you can see very clearly in the images of Jesus presented in the gospels.

*Audience:* On trying to love our parents after we become adults, how can we best show them love when they continue to irritate us? My tendency is to blow them out of the water whenever we get onto something sensitive.

*Moore:* By "blow them out of the water," do you mean with all your rageful heavy artillery?

*Audience:* Yes.

*Moore:* You have to start somewhere. We all have so much stuff on the agenda with our parents, that it's easy just to despair and never get started. We either want to put it all in one letter, or one conversation, or just cut them off. You can start by being more firmly truthful with them and not worrying so much about their reaction. They have to learn to be grown ups too, you know, but the important thing is to get in touch with your love for them, because otherwise, it makes everything else more difficult.

Try to express your feelings for them. Sometimes letters work well with parents, because conversational patterns are usually so set up and stereotyped. Phone calls can be like that too, with everyone following the same basic pattern: "How is so and so? How is Aunt so and so?" You have a stereotyped ritual to go through. Almost everyone could write down from memory the ritual that prevails in their phone calls with their parents, and all for the purpose of avoiding true contact and real communication.

*Audience:* So you are saying it's all right to let all that bad stuff hang out, but at the same time you come back with the hug, and the love, and "Boy, this has been a noisy kind of day, but I really feel that I've told you a lot, and I love you."

*Moore:* Yes, if I were going to err, I would want to err in the direction of truth, because we tend just to let those things ride until they die.

You don't want to get into the fantasy that you're going to fix everything with your parents, because one of the things you need to realize is that they are who they are, and they are probably always going to be who they are. They are probably not going to undergo any enormous transformation, whether from depth psychoanalysis or anything else. In fact, just consider whether it would even be possible, much less realistic or necessary, for them suddenly to try to transform their basic personalities at this late date in life just to suit the feelings of adult children they may seldom see. No, they may well continue on to the end of life being the persons that they are. It is very important for us to get that clear and be mature enough to accept it.

That may be more of a problem for you if your relationship has been so full of hate that you cannot feel or express your affection. Most adults, however, are somewhat in touch with the feeling of affection for their parents. Some, of course, are so angry that they couldn't say they feel anything for them. I find that in clients sometimes, but most people do have feelings of real affection, even though a lot of it is not expressed.

You can always carefully and thoughtfully write a letter. Most parents love to get letters in which their children manage to tell them how much they love them. Then they can take them out and read them on a bad day. So I often recommend letters instead of tense conversations.

*Audience:* The other night I was watching a **television program about loving people**, and I called a friend of mine who is a parent, but she said she just couldn't watch it because it caused too many emotions to come out. I felt bad for her and wondered if this went into all the relationships she had with her kids and others in the family.

*Moore:* It reaches everywhere into all your relationships. The man you watched is a little naïve, romantic, and sentimental, and he is a popular teacher, not an analyst, and he has not seen a lot of the horror that some of us have seen. Yet an enormous amount of what he says about expressing love is right. You can qualify things to death and make people miss the point.

Express your love, folks! Time is running out. You don't know how much more time you have left to do it. It's not going to hurt you to give someone a little love. You're not going to end up with less.

I'm glad you mentioned him, because he is an important fellow for spreading these insights and ideas. He is doing a lot of good things for people now.

The point you made is important. Some of us are so wounded and hurt. That is why Christmas is so painful for a lot of people, because it brings up all that emotional awareness. It reminds us how little we are able to express our love, and how little others are able to express their love for us. Yet we must not succumb to despair but rather step forward in faith and hope.

*Audience:* Isn't it possible that **our Christian faith** and the grace in our lives can substitute for our mirroring of ourselves, and that we can be grateful enough that we are really loved by God and sustained by Divine Love? Cannot this love overcome our deficiencies and deficits so we can go beyond what our human brokenness dictates?

*Moore:* Yes, that is where the healing will start for most of us. Jung himself once said that healing would only come to people past midlife by developing their sense of the numinous, their spiritual or religious side, and that is what he was talking about. You have to get in touch with the Christ within. He had other ways of talking about it that affirm the faith that Christ sees us the way we really are, the true self, and that the Divine takes delight in us.

That's a good place for us to stop. Thank you very much, it's been a joy to be with you.

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