

Chapter One*The World is Our Oyster*

If there is a viewpoint implicit in these pages now, it is an era of obsessive self-denial and/or obsessive greed. We therefore need to keep our mind on the most important truth, the balance of *Self*. Do not deceive yourself into thinking someone will put you or your problems ahead of their problems and “save your day”. That is obsessive self-denial. Most will not be paying attention unless you receive a bill through services rendered or friendly acquaintances need something from you, eluding to possible assistance from them in the future. That assistance never comes. It is unfortunate the world has come to this. What happened to the handshake you could believe in?

Others are overindulging without thought of depleting resources. These people fear not having a slice of the “good life” and they do whatever it takes to get it, right or wrong. They go into debt just “to have.” They lie and deceive just “to have”. More is never enough for this generation. Survival is an altogether different code of ethics now days. These type people are both takers and users and usually maintain an illusion of “having” for their family and friends when actually they have nothing. They attach themselves to those who do “have” to keep appearances and do nothing to assist in maintaining that status. When the well runs dry, they move on and blame “the parting of ways” on the person they are leaving. Of course, it would never be their fault! If you are the giver to these type people and finally stop giving, those “friends” amazingly stop paying special attention because you are now a perceived dried resource for them. You served a purpose for them, which was a means to their end.

I am not saying you will never find a person who truly loves you unconditionally with all your issues, but finding that pearl amidst all the possible shells is one journey. The pearl of your dreams will be the one speaking to your heart, the one you fell in love and cherish above all else. You never want to leave them and they do not want to leave you despite the forthcomings of each! You will assist each other through any crisis, respect each other and insecurity will never be an issue. If someone truly loves you, that person becomes the wind beneath your wings as long as you make the effort to be their wind as well. It is not “all about one person” in a team. I need to add “effort” to that thought because if effort is not present from both, you become a taker or a giver. Together, with loving “effort”, you are compatible and “in love”.

If you find the right person that aligns nicely with your life, you will feel relief rather than a slow drain of life from you. The easiest assessment is to say “No” once in awhile and see if the person accepts your value to set limits. Eventually, the person who rejects your value of living will probably locate someone else to align his or her existence. At this point, you could be thankful for this. If you drain life from others or allow others to drain from you, your boundaries are unhealthy. Always set boundaries healthy for you, follow through with your belief in them and others either understand the belief or it is not accepted. This does not mean values and boundaries cannot change. Maybe you have a value that is unhealthy and needs changing. Life is a constant evolution. If you choose to be rigid and never change, you may find many people running in and out of your life quickly. The person accepting who you are and what you want for yourself will accept your answer and still you will feel respected, loved, and energized. You also need to respect and accept boundaries healthy for them. I hope the two can align.

We evolve in the world like a pearl growing alone in a shell deep under pounds of water pressure. Until you have achieved self-actualization, which results in becoming a pearl, you will always be in search of approval and consistent need of validation until someone obliges. It could be a very long, lonely wait to never for that validation. The pounds of pressure interfering with the receipt of validation include the external world of people and circumstance too busy seeking validation for themselves. Usually this disproportionate need for validation by many will somehow be a detriment to your own *Self* at some point - if you are not paying attention. You lose your own way, your thoughts, your money and sometimes your dignity. People often have hidden agendas and the ability to identify whether that agenda is for your good is tricky. Some of us need to see a pattern of self-seeking behavior among the glitter of gold and by then, the damage is usually complete. All you can do is chock it up to another experience.

Sometimes you can see right away and other times it takes months or years to see the elusiveness of another person's pattern. Once you get the better of it, you may find yourself with fewer true friends and count more on yourself as a best friend. You begin to weed out all the pseudo friends. You may feel lonely at first, but will feel stronger and more at peace, which is the grounding you need to hear your personal therapist. You can call this therapist "your own person, your intuition, your inner guide, your God." Ultimately, it points back to you.

Who is this therapist you say? The *Self* is our therapist and a representation of our personal identity. An element of "I" we became briefly acquainted at a young age. Our personal therapist gave us permission to play and use our imagination as a component of growing up. We

thought we knew and understood who we were and where they headed us until those parents, friends, peers and teachers inaccurately informed us “the Self” was not a developed identity but handed to you. Many of our parents said more than once... “Think my way or the highway” or cross-questioned “Who do you think you are?” Normally, the latter question would be easy to answer, but there was a pre-emptive feeling of danger if we told the truth. I am me.

Our physique was monitored consistently for size, weight, and physical identities with very little focus on developing our thoughts and visions. The combination of both are necessary to manifest distinctiveness of esteem all our own. As children, we are open to becoming the best we are to be with hopeful guidance by the almighty parent we know is perfect! The question exists, however, as to the level of realistic perfection the parent has achieved to guide you? It is, of course, different for everyone. Everyone has inherited some dysfunction and yet there is always a gift in every negative part as well as the positive. Not all parents are good role models sorry to say. We still can learn from their mistakes. Do we hang on to the negative dysfunction of our parents/guardians as our own and make this an excuse why we never make it in life? Alternatively, we need to embrace and understand their problems are only a part of our personal history. We have every right to make changes and adjustments for the betterment of all concerned. At the very least, your Self.

Children are so vulnerable to intercept wrong perceptions by the example parents provide or through unexplained response to situations that make no sense to a child. Many children cannot conceive why parents split because no one ever gives an honest explanation either out of

ignorance or to shield the child from a perceived harmful reality. This is usually because parents have not been honest with themselves, so how can they be honest with the child. The child soul imprints with an unspoken impression of guilt from exclusion of one or the other parent. This branding continues through to adulthood and becomes that elusive, self-sabotaging fear of abandonment or rejection. What child wants to take sides? What parent would put them in the position of taking sides with an impending perception of rejection from either parent?

Personal feelings and visualization flow unencumbered with no thought of retribution at a young age, but without healthy guidance and nurturing, the creative imagination and intuition pushes aside, but is never lost. There is a small opportunity of time to perceive and believe *our truth* is authentic. We were truly a firefighter or cowboy and dressed the part with such empowerment and belief of self as a child. Everyone reflected on how cute we looked, but alas, not reality. At some point, we are enlightened it is time to grow up. However, our minds are re-directed to what new developments for our growth? Someone we respect and want to emulate has dropped a ball somewhere and forgot to re-direct the game! They walked away! As Cat Stevens says in a song: *When we begin to talk, we are forced to listen.* What is anyone actually saying though? What are you actually hearing and seeing? Sayings like: *You are to be seen and not heard, you are a big boy now and big boys don't cry; quit being a baby; your invisible friends aren't real.* Are these quotes that teach us how to deal with life in the real world?

These contra indicative statements begin creeping into our precious, formidable minds. To disbelieve in the magic of creativity has disheartened many natural urges children need to be

inspired and allow intuition to emerge at the most precious age when it is working at its peak naturally. As we are repetitively alerted, disheartenment is all part of life and growing up. We are told to wake up and smell the roses! Fantasy of dreams does not exist in the real world! I personally know parents who are purposely eliminating every holiday because they do not want their children to believe in a “fallacy”. What a terrible shame we take this simple experience of creative mind development from our children.

Perceiving fantasy as truth is valid at that point in life. The passion of those perceived thoughts made all children enjoy life with ecstasy and enthusiasm. Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, and the Tooth Fairy...all fantastic visualizations we knew were real at the time because presents and candy appeared while we were asleep no less! We did not even have to wait up for them. It had to be magic because we received exactly what we wanted! Who would know this! Some parents were able to maintain the magical elusion of these icons in the eyes of their children, which followed them well into adulthood. Children can visualize and create stories instantly because the flow of thought has no blockage and the filter is not quite in place. As they say, *out of the mouths of babes*. Truth comes tumbling out of their mouths. Lies don't exist at this point, but their ability to create complete fabrications are creative and humorous at best. Adults have a more difficult time creating because they have to deal with doubt, fear and now being an “adult”, which replaced spontaneous and fearless childlike action straight from the heart. We begin to live in that hollow shell of darkness, boredom and depression.

Compare us to the oyster or pearl that thrives in a hollow mollusk. An oyster leads a dreadful but stirring life. Alone, in the dark, growing in a constant swirl of water and indeed, its chance to live is slim, because the growth years afterward are full of certain danger. The oyster's truth is eventual demise that includes no thought or visualization ability to recommend changes. This is not far from our own life journey if we allow. The pearl however can last forever if found and nurtured. It provides joy and beauty. The more pearls, the more ornate its presentation. One pearl alone can also be simply elegant. Unique as we are, whether standing alone or shining in ornate presentation with others, is our choice.

Nevertheless, the mollusk interestingly has a comparable makeup to humans. It has a mouth, heart, intestines, anus, and a mantle for protection. Not all mollusks produce pearls and pearls that do grow in edible oysters are not desirable. It is rare a pearl ever forms in an edible oyster. Go figure. Each produces its own contribution to the world. One existence of a mollusk is to be an aphrodisiac or special treat and the other admired as a beautiful ornate bauble. Both are unique to the same family, but have different significance. In comparison, people also have different paths to travel and yet we come from the same family known as humans.

To understand the birth of a pearl is rather interesting because it parallels a part of our lives we see as an annoyance instead of progression. Irritations, I mean. Nevertheless, for the pearl it begins with an irritation, an intruding particle or parasite entrapped between the tissue and mantle of the mollusk. In short, to protect its self from this intruder, the mantle produces two materials that cover this intrusion known as nacre. The bigger the irritation, the more nacre used,

the bigger the pearl and so forth. The quality of nacre and end result of a quality pearl depends on the quality of the mantle for protection as well as the environment that it “grows”. I am sensing a trend that parallels people again. Ummm? Do you feel the same about irritations in your life now?

Sometimes, those nasty little irritations reveal truths we do not want to see or we did not know existed. Sometimes they make you realize change is needed. At times, they just keep coming back as a reminder to look at our self, not others. Why would something irritate you still?

I hope you have built up some protective *nacre* in your life to shield you. Call these coping mechanisms. They moderate stress levels and help divert depressions. It is a behavioral tool, our nacre, which offsets or overcomes adversity, disadvantage, or disability without correcting or eliminating the underlying issue. The intruder or irritation is the birth particle. It remains always as a permanent part of the center. All of our irritations, intrusions, and obstacles remain part of us. It is not meant for us to rid ourselves of our irritations, but to embrace them, understand them and allow them to be the beginning part of our personal development. Our earthly world is the canvass of opportunity for learning to blend irritations and problems with the right environment and cultivate our perfect pearl for the sole chosen purpose unique to our personal growth.