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Psychoeducation Series

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How to Heal and Empower Yourself by Connecting with Your Inner Child

*Who or What is
Your Inner Child?*

Benefits of Connecting
with Your Inner Child

Guided Meditation

The Power of the Image



In every real man a child is hidden that wants to play.

– Friedrich Nietzsche

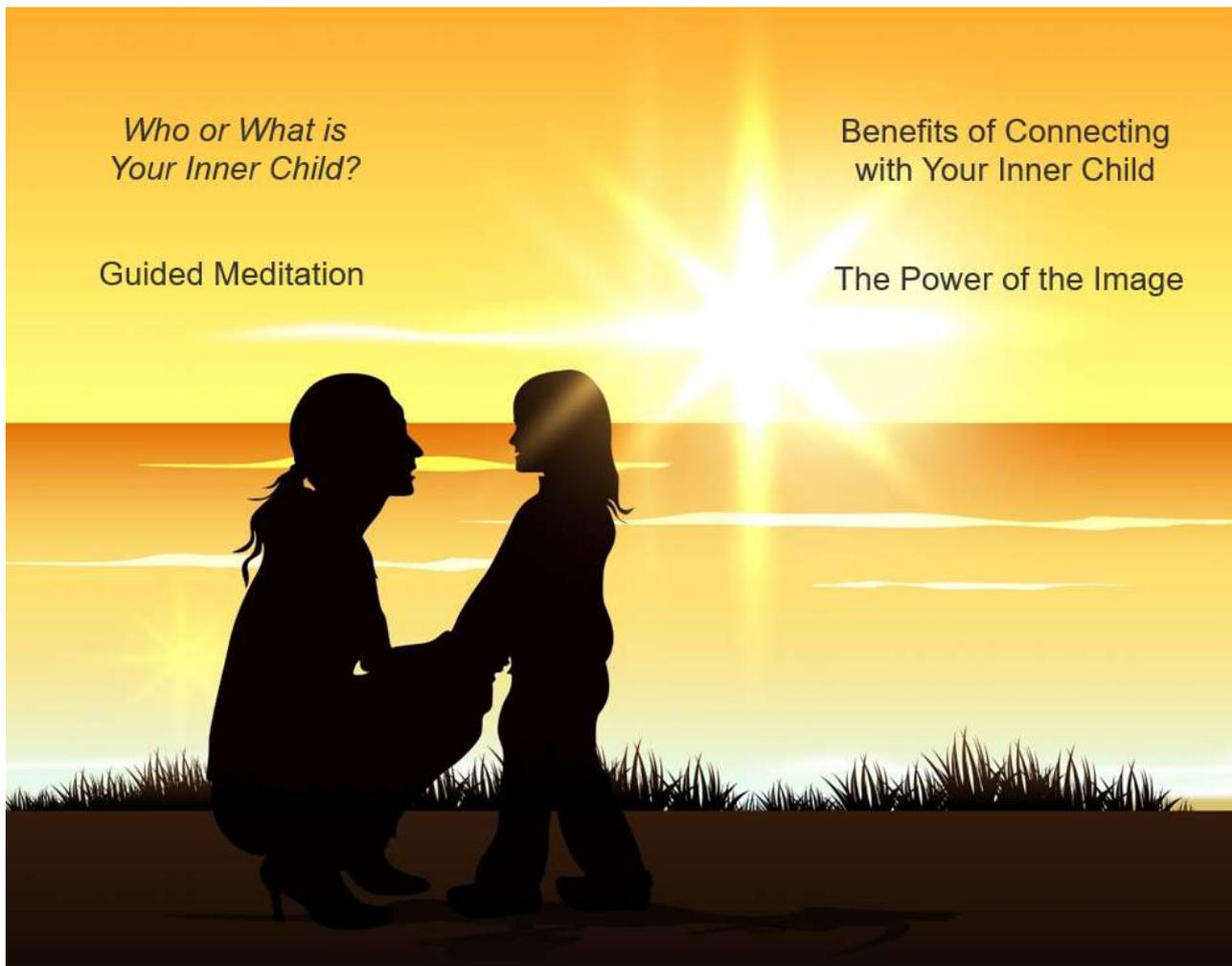
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Empowering People Through Insightful Psychology Results

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Who or What is Your Inner Child?

Experience has taught us that we have only one enduring weapon in our struggle against mental illness: The emotional discovery and emotional acceptance of the truth in the individual and unique history of our childhood.

– Alice Miller, Psychologist, Psychoanalyst and Philosopher

The inner child is a primary subconscious force.

Quite simply, it is the child we once were and with whom we might, to some extent, have lost touch with on the way to adulthood.

We reconnect to the inner child to free ourselves from maladaptive emotional and behavioral patterns

There's a compassion that comes when you look at a child.

The idea of my grown-up self-taking care of, and nurturing the wounded little boy in me that was once alone and went through a lot of pain, fear, emptiness, loneliness and despair can be enormously helpful and empowering

Your inner child is real, not literally or physically, but intra-psychically, figuratively and metaphorically real. It is your extraordinarily powerful psychological or phenomenological reality. Everyone carries an unconscious internalised world of personal relationships. This includes mental representations that reflect earlier experiences of self and others which often surface as patterns in current relationships and interpersonal problems.

The inner child is sometimes referred to using different terms in the psychological literature. Namely, “the child archetype”, “the child within”, “the wonder child” or “the wounded child”. In Schema Therapy, for example, the term “child modes” are used (e.g. Vulnerable Child; Lonely Child; Impulsive or Undisciplined Child; Angry Child; and Happy, Contented or Authentic Child).

In a general way, the term Vulnerable Child (VC) is used to describe the part of the self that carries all the emotional pain belonging to childhood as result of our unmet needs or suppressed childhood emotions.

Myths

Many people I have worked with have admitted that when they first came to psychotherapy and heard words such as ‘inner child’ or ‘self-compassion’, they wanted to puke.

Other people usually report they don't have memories from their childhood, that they have ‘blank periods’ or ‘childhood amnesia’ and that they have no idea how they felt as a child (all very common experiences), that they don't even care about all this, that they don't want to look at their past, or that they have “moved on”! After all, they say, *how could my so-called ‘inner child’ possibly play a significant role in my life today?*

Reality

The reality is that many of so-called adults are not truly adults at all. Of course, we all become older. Psychologically or emotionally speaking, however, this is not adulthood.

True adulthood is about acknowledging, accepting, and taking responsibility for loving and parenting one's own inner child. For many adults, this never happens. Instead, their inner child has been denied, neglected, denigrated, dismissed, discredited, abandoned or rejected.

We are told by society to “grow up” putting childish things aside.

* * * * *

We have been taught that to become adults, our inner child – representing our child-like capacity for innocence, wonder, awe, joy, sensitivity and playfulness – must be suppressed, stifled, overcome, squashed or even killed. The inner child comprises all these qualities and potentialities.

On the other hand, the inner child also holds our accumulated childhood hurts, disappointments, traumas, fears and angers. ‘Grown-ups’ are often convinced they have successfully outgrown, abandoned, and left this child and its emotional baggage long behind. This is far from the truth!

* * * * *

The reality is that these so-called 'grown-ups' or adults are unwittingly being constantly influenced or covertly controlled by their subconscious inner child. For many people, it is not an adult self-directing their lives, but rather an emotionally wounded inner child inhabiting an adult body. A four-year-old running around in a forty-year-old frame. Often, it's a hurt, angry, fearful little boy or girl calling the shots, making adult decisions.

The reality is that, often, your inner child takes over and you become an emotional four-year-old who can't control her/his emotions, impulses, and/or own life.

A boy or girl being sent out into the world to do a man's or woman's job. A five or seven-year-old trying to engage in grown-up relationships. Can a child have a mature relationship? A career? An independent life? This is exactly what's happening with many people every day, to some degree or another.

Then, we wonder why our relationships fall apart. Why we feel so anxious, afraid, insecure, inferior, small, lost or lonely. Think about this.

How would any child feel having to fend for themselves in an apparently adult world, without proper parental supervision, protection, structure, guidance or support?

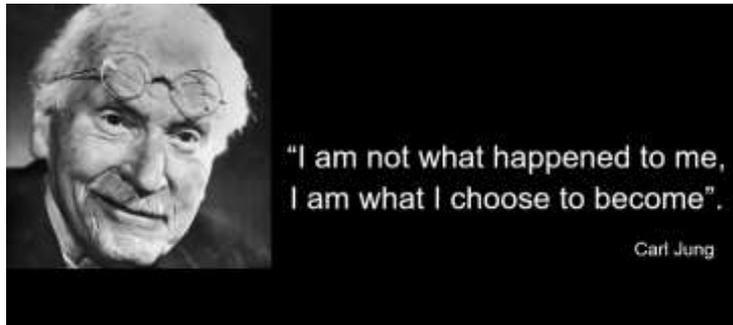
Twelve Signs to Recognise That You Have a Wounded Inner Child

1. You constantly criticise or blame yourself for your mistakes or supposed inadequacies.
2. You're harsh or unforgiving to yourself, rigid, and a perfectionist (it doesn't matter how hard you try, or how much you achieve, nothing is never enough and you're never satisfied with yourself).
3. You're a 'people-pleaser' (you need others' approval all cost, are very sensitive to criticism, feel easily offended, find it extremely difficult to say 'no' – decline requests or express discontent, apologise way too often, and always put on a fake smile). The idea of being disliked or rejected by others terrifies you.
4. You increasingly or often feel annoyed, frustrated, angry, or become snappy, for no apparent reason.
5. You have deep abandonment issues and would cling to any relationships, even when they are toxic.
6. You're a hoarder of things, emotions, people, and you have a hard time letting go (you hold grudges).
7. You feel that there is something wrong with you, in the deepest part of yourself.
8. You lack self-esteem, self-confidence, and don't have a strong sense of identity.
9. You deliberately like being in conflict or disagreeing with people around you.
10. You experience high anxiety when going out of your comfort zone.
11. You have a hard time committing, trusting others, or holding a job.
12. You feel inadequate as a person.

❖ There are many more signs that your inner child may be wounded (e.g. shame, anxiety, fears, phobias, addictions, gambling, insecurities, self-defeating and self-sabotaging behaviours – including unhealthy relationship patterns). In fact, all of us, have to some degree traumas/issues from our past that need addressing before we can realise our full potential.

The more that you ignore, disown or abandon your wounded child, the more it will control you. It becomes your 'shadow' – the side of your personality that you don't want to admit to having, and reject or suppress. This can have disastrous life consequences.

Psychotherapy can help you to achieve powerful and surprisingly quick results. It can help you to transcend your personal history, and to gain control of your life by connecting you with your inner child. So, you can become your best possible self.



Benefits of Connecting with Your Inner Child

1. Increased Self-awareness

Whenever you feel insecure, afraid or anxious, very likely this is your inner child.

Maybe you are a functional and – possibly – a very successful adult who has no reason to feel scared of, for example, standing up to others (including your parents, partner, boss, or other parental or authority figures).

What you may not realise is that, as a child, you were not allowed to have your own opinion, voice, or feeling. As a result, you turned that viewpoint inwards and stopped allowing yourself to have a voice or feelings and to be assertive. You learnt that you couldn't speak your truth!

Further, perhaps (only perhaps), you also arrived at the conclusion that you didn't matter, and that others were always more important than you. This is probably the case if you are one of these people that feels compelled to always please or help others – usually, to your own detriment, sacrifice, or neglect.

And perhaps, depending on your age, parent's beliefs, or cultural background, all of the above was further reinforced throughout your education at school.

Caveat:

The above, of course, **doesn't mean you shouldn't help others**. It means that you can help others:

1. When it is your conscious choice to do so – not out of necessity, compulsion or conditioning.
2. Once you have met your basic or essential emotional needs first (you cannot give to others what you don't have). Think, for example, of the inflight passenger safety announcement made by flight attendants before taking off in relation to the *oxygen mask* that will automatically appear in front of you:

“If you are travelling with a child or someone who requires assistance, secure your mask first and then assist the other person.”



Perhaps, when you were young, you received the message that:

“What you thought, felt, and wanted was not important”.

Perhaps, you were taught (or learned) that:

“What you wanted wasn't important; what's important is what others want”.

Perhaps, you were (or felt) intimidated by accusations of **'selfishness'** when you attempted to stand up for yourself.



The above is only an example. There might be other issues that relate to your inner child.

Once you're able to identify that your fear stems from your inner child, you'll be able to soothe her/him, and tell him/her that everything is OK. That s/he is now protected and under 'new management'! You will have achieved self-leadership – the capability to achieve the direction and motivation to positively influence your own performance.

Hence, gaining self-awareness is the first step towards your healing and empowerment.

2. Healing

Although you love your parents, you have to acknowledge and admit that they are human and made mistakes. Similarly, they probably did the best they could while raising you. Unfortunately, simply being aware of this doesn't take away any of the pain or trauma from your childhood.

If you let your pain fester for too long, it can cause you resentment, and you can become a victim, and/or a hostage to your own sadness.

However, if you begin to connect with your inner/vulnerable child, become compassionate towards him/her, and nurture her/him, healing of your inner child, and you as an adult, will happen.

3. Empowerment

When you are no longer plagued by self-doubt, insecurity, and many other forms of fear, you'll be a confident, fearless, and courageous individual.

By connecting with your inner child, you can take control of your emotions and stand up for yourself when needed, and build resilience.

Then, you'll have your own unique voice, values, opinions, and self-worth.

You will become your own authority. This will give you power (true inner power over yourself). You will become empowered.

You'll be authentic, and able to speak your truth!

4. Behaviour Change

When your emotional security feels threatened, you can recognise that it is your inner child, and that your inner child is not who you are today.

This can happen relatively quickly, and sometimes overnight, via psychotherapy.

You can learn the importance of self-soothing and identifying emotions rather than avoiding them. This will make you a happier, stronger, calmer and more successful person in all areas of your life.

Your Life Does NOT Belong to Others
and
You Are NOT in the World to
Live Up to Someone Else's Expectations.

How might we as individuals get in touch with the child that lives within us? By killing the dragon 'Thou shalt'. By choosing not to live by other people's rules? Right. Respecting them, but not living by them.

– Joseph Campbell

The Power of the Image

The power of the image is a pathway between your unconscious and conscious state of mind.

Images arise purposefully from our psyche (e.g. dreams) to give us clues about why we are feeling a certain way. Feelings and images, like symbols (representations), are communications from our psyche to help us better understand what issues need attention and how to proceed in the most effective manner.

Images drift down from our conscious minds into psyche. This is called stimulating the active imagination, and it's the process that is used during guided meditations.

One of the purposes of these meditations is to interact with images that may bring us joy, calm, serenity, peacefulness, and insight.

There is the potential for tremendous healing while working with images for there are no bounds of past, present, and future, and we can essentially create whatever reality we desire.

This new perception created in a meditative state is able to soften the context of our memory and give us relief. The negative self-beliefs, traumas, and fears that we experienced as children may now be dispelled by our older, more seasoned selves. We simply have to go back and visit that younger self. We must reacquaint ourselves with the wounded or vulnerable child within.

Guided Meditation

Preparation

Turn off your mobile phone. Find a comfortable place, without loud noise or traffic.

Take off your shoes. Sit down in a comfortable chair, keep your feet on the ground, uncross your legs, keep your hands in your lap, and use your back rest making sure your spine straight. Alternatively, you can lay down in bed.

Close your eyes. Observe your breath for few seconds, without controlling it. Inhale to the count of four. Pause to the count of two. Exhale to the count of six.

As you inhale through your nose, imagine that all of the air you pull in is full of peace, harmony, love, compassion, kindness, joy, and laughter.

As you exhale through your mouth, imagine that all stress, worry, and anxiety are leaving your body.

Do this for about 5 minutes, and then use the imagery provided below (in the next page).

** If you haven't done relaxation or meditation before, you can begin to practice by trying some of the links below.*

[Andrew Johnson – Relax. Change. Create](#)

[Heaviness Meditation with Andrew Johnson](#)

[Moment of Relaxation with Andrew Johnson](#)

[Find Your Calm – Sleep more. Stress less. Live better](#)

[Head in the Clouds – Links to Free Online Guided Meditations](#)

[Smiling Mind](#)

(Offers free mindfulness apps)

[UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center – Guided Meditations](#)

(Offers a variety of free guided meditations online)

[Tara Brach Guided Meditations](#)

(Offers a variety of free guided meditations online)

[Bloom – Better You](#)



Imagery

Imagine that you're sitting outside. The grass feels soft against your skin. You're looking at the beautiful purples, oranges, and blues that surround you and sway in the breeze.

The air is warm and full of light, and you watch as birds move above your head.

You notice that a small child is moving towards you across the open field. You recognise the way the child walks. You get up to meet the child.

Looking down into his eyes, you realise that you are looking into the eyes of your younger self.

You reach out and take the hand of your younger self and guide him to sit down next to you.

This is the kid who was not able to express himself when he felt neglected, alone, or abandoned.

This is the part of you that felt alone, scared, unwanted, or rejected. This is your inner vulnerable child that sometimes still panics, wants to run away, and needs your full attention, protection, nurturing, and care.

You bring this young vulnerable child onto your lap and hug him tight.

You tell him that everything will be OK – that he's no longer alone because he's now safe with you.

Hold him tight for several minutes consoling and reassuring him.

Tell him that you will always be there to take care of him.



Do this exercise each morning and/or night.

As you soothe the wounded or vulnerable child inside you, the grown-up (adult) that you have become will begin to feel different—more secure, less anxious, and more confident about your relationships and everything in your life.



Imagery

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Finally, and just in case that you're still wondering whether this inner child business is a lot 'Mumbo Jumbo', please find below a reference list of highly credible books, journal articles, and two doctoral dissertations, related to the *Inner Child*. Most of them, except the books, can be accessed using the links included via [Google Scholar](#) or elsewhere in the internet.

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