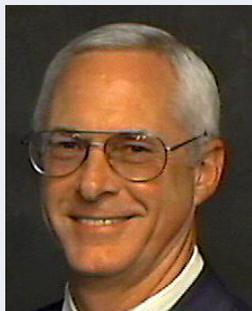


# Stonebriar Psychiatric Services News & Views

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#### **Services We Offer**

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## ***Telling Yourself and Others the Truth***

The truth can be hard, really hard. To be honest about myself, my shortcomings, and my needs – that can be very challenging. To be honest with myself and others requires me to look at the unresolved parts of me, the parts that are still unfinished and incomplete. To share them with someone else requires vulnerability, admission, and a willingness to be responsible in addressing those unfinished parts.

The majority of people put forth considerable effort to hide or disguise their real selves. They hide truth about who they are from themselves and also from others. The motive behind this is rarely conceived out of ill-will, but rather arises out of fear. This may be difficult to acknowledge, but think about the reality of this in terms of human behaviors. Take, for example, the pursuing of power, status, achievements, possessions, plastic surgery alterations, body building, and even health supplements. Each of these can serve to disguise the reality of our mortality, our aging bodies, our weaknesses, and our physical and emotional fragility. Advertising is committed to the same end, to help people connect with the next product that will help them to feel more powerful, desirable, attractive, wanted, and admired. We are trying to avoid feeling impotent, undesirable, unattractive, unwanted, and despised.

These strategies can work well for us, at least until the interruption of a disfiguring car accident, an unexpected diagnosis of cancer, serious financial crisis, or when some other horrible tragedy confronts us. Such crises remind us that we are far more fragile than we typically grant awareness. We find ourselves offended by the truth that despite how hard we try, we cannot control everything in our lives and defend against pain.

### **The How and Why of Truth Avoidance**

Humans have a curious capacity for avoidance, including the expression of their true selves in relationships. We camouflage insecurity, fear of rejection, imperfection, and shame through all manner of defense mechanisms. This camouflage can manifest in the form of anger, pride, extroversion, introversion, appeasing, manipulation, denial, blaming, judgmentalism, and intellectualism. People in a pattern of addiction avoid truth and the exposure of their true selves; this is accomplished through many forms of denial and by the altering of consciousness.

So why hide the truth that we are vulnerable, that we do get hurt, and that we do have fears? The answer is exposure. Without the camouflage of our defense mechanisms, we feel exposed. If we are left exposed, our vulnerabilities and insecurities are revealed. We learn in childhood and adolescence that being our true selves, warts and all, is not totally acceptable to others. We learn that exposure of our vulnerabilities may incite someone to anger, invite judgement or ridicule, or cause us to be dismissed, rejected, or even possibly abandoned. In my two 2010 articles on "Parts of Self: Losing and Becoming Whole Again," we address this issue and how we realize that there are limits and qualifications of being accepted by others. To cope with this, we develop defense mechanisms called "parts of self" that can help insulate against potential rejection, emotional pain, and insecurity.

### **Fears Drive Our Avoidance of Truth**

Truth avoidance in relationship, at its core, is about fear. Relational fears are rooted in our earliest attachment experiences, which can include verbal and preverbal (before we learned language) experiences. Given that no one has perfect parents, we will all receive imperfect parenting and the imperfect meeting of our needs. All

## Treatment for

Depression  
Anxiety / Panic Attacks  
Eating Disorders  
Bi-polar Disorder  
Obsessive –  
Compulsive  
Disorder  
Compulsive Behaviors  
such as sexual  
addiction  
Post-traumatic Stress  
Disorder from past  
abuse  
Ryritional issues  
Adjustment to life  
changes

## Ages Served

Adult  
Adolescent  
Children ages 10 & up



individuals experience some pain and wounding in the attachment process because caregivers cannot be perfectly attuned, available, and attentive to us 100% of the time.

Parents who have addressed their own hurts from the past and have self-awareness are more likely to be sensitive to their children's needs, better able to soothe and comfort their children, and therefore more likely to have more emotionally resilient children. They are more resolved in their past and thus freer emotionally to be present to their children and to others. Parents who experienced their own significant wounding and have not addressed this honestly are still unresolved and tied to their past. Unresolved parents are more likely to misread or misinterpret the behaviors of their children and be less nurturing. They may overlook or minimize needs in their children that they had to disown in themselves because they did not get them met either. They may respond in ways that are unobservant, thoughtless, unloving, sterile, or selfish. Parental responses that are overly indulgent, appeasing, or lacking limits can also indicate unresolved issues.

In many ways, it is as if their emotional energy is stuck in the past, keeping them in a sort of blindness about themselves, their children, and other important relationships. To be clear, this has nothing to do with how much we care for our children, but rather our ability to love them in a way that meets their unique emotional needs. We need to understand that until we can look upon our own pain and fears with compassionate honesty, we will not be able to look upon others' pain with true compassionate honesty. We cannot take our children (or others for that matter) where we have not gone ourselves.

### Courageously Telling the Truth

So how do we free ourselves from the entanglement of unresolved pain and fear and live more authentically in our relationships? We make a commitment to courageously address the truth about our fears and pain. We choose to deliberately expose that which has not seen the light of day in years, because we were too afraid of getting hurt and of the unknown. We get honest with ourselves in the context of a safe relationship. We were wounded in the context of relationship and therefore we will need to heal in the context of relationship.

When getting honest with yourself and others, it is important to be deliberate and intentional about whom you choose for your support. Surround yourself with people who also believe in honesty and take self-responsibility for themselves and their own healing. If you have a supportive spouse, family member, or trusted friend, you can start by sharing your new commitment with them. You may need to seek out healthier friends, get into a support group, participate in a therapy group, build a relationship with a trustworthy mentor, and/or consider beginning individual or couples therapy with a sound, skilled therapist. If you have been avoiding unresolved spiritual issues, this can be a growthful time to get honest about hiding from God.

In the context of safe relationships, you can begin to practice sharing honestly about your own fears and insecurities. In the shelter of safe relationships, we have the opportunity to release old defenses and emotional walls and to receive compassionate understanding. As we do the hard work of revealing our true selves, we are increasingly able to release from the past and embrace freedom of self, freedom in relationship, and freedom to be fully present and joyfully alive.



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