

STAGE RE-BUILDING NINE

LEFTOVERS HAVE TO BE CLEARED

Earlier experiences are extremely influential in our life and the attitudes and feelings we develop in relationships with parents, family, friends and partners are bound to carry over into new relationships. Some of these attitudes and feelings are helpful in new relationships and others are not.

As we have explored earlier common leftover problem, even for adults, is an unresolved need to rebel against constraints such as parental rules. Recognise the valuable leftovers so you can keep and nourish them and then work at changing those which simply get in the way.

Thelma was talking about how hard it was with her former partner. 'Sometimes he sounds like his father when he criticises me and I just can't help but fly off the handle at him. It's not fair for me to do that, but I can't stop it.'

Steven reported that he grew up with a father who was always criticising him to his face but then would tell others how proud he was of his son. He decided that he wanted to be praised to his face so in choosing a partner he found a woman who he thought would give him lots of praise. After a period of time in their relationship, he realised that he had chosen a critical woman even though he had tried not to. 'I don't understand what happened- I never thought I'd choose someone like my father.'

Rick and Paul had a very respectable committed relationship, with a lifestyle very much like that of their parents. Suddenly

Paul's behaviour changed. He began to associate with a younger crowd, started all kinds of activities which he had never tried before, and took more time for himself, apart from the relationship. One day he reported back to Rick that he felt too confined in the relationship and that he was going to have to go off and 'get his head on straight.'

So how much are you carrying in terms of leftovers from earlier days? You may have learned to carry extra weight in your past relationship or perhaps in your relationships with parents, school chums, friends or others while you grew up. Time to unload those unneeded burdens. You may have thought that you left all those hang-ups behind in your former relationship. So maybe you didn't realise they existed until a new relationship came along and then you were forced to look into your back pack to see what you were carrying.

Our relationships with others are partially an attempt to fill up the deficiencies within ourselves. We develop a pattern of interaction based upon such feelings of rejection, loneliness, a need to feel guilty, or on a more positive note, feelings of happiness. We accept our feelings in relationships with others.

One example from an early series of seminars was Carolyn which she and I called the stray cat syndrome. Carolyn had learned to bring home stray cats probably since childhood and she told me how good she would feel when she could play 'Florence Nightingale.' Then the stray cat starts drinking too much alcohol and Carolyn tries hard to rescue them from the perils of alcohol. Peter her partner drinks more (after all he is getting a lot of attention from drinking!). Finally Carolyn would reach her martyr's tolerance limit and either she leaves the relationship or he leaves. Then she proclaims loudly to everyone how good it feels

not to be taking care of that drunken bum. She starts going out with a friend and finds a man she is sure 'will never be an alcoholic' and they finally decide to enter a committed relationship. The pattern starts repeating and he begins drinking too much. Carolyn again provides care, giving him his 'milk in a saucer' every evening when he comes home until one day it suddenly strikes her 'I decided to commit myself to another alcoholic!'

Carolyn seems to have a need within her to take care of stray cats. It makes her, at one powerful level, feel good. She will continue, either consciously or unconsciously to need to care for another. Here it is easy to see the critical need to examine leftover patterns and to discard those which are really hurting us and our relationships.

Often a new relationship will provide a method of working on the leftovers. They may arise and you may become angry at that person and express your irritation. He or she reacts, 'Those comments don't fit me, and I don't know what you are talking about. I am listening to what you say but it doesn't seem to apply to me so where is it coming from?'

If you are now becoming more aware of your feelings and the voices talking inside your head you may be able to express your irritation and then tie it in with an earlier relationship. Sometimes people even use the old person's name in their anger, and that is a real clue to where the problem is coming from. Listen to the voices, do some reflecting, and when the new friend says that does not fit with them, try to discover who it does fit with. When you begin to recognise who it is you are actually angry with analyse your feelings for insight into what makes you behave this way. Communication with another person is helpful at this time

because it provides a sounding board to bounce your feelings off just as the wall at school bounces back the ball and demands you handle the ball.

In the shell stage one does what one should do; in the rebel stage what one should not do and in the love stage what one wants to do. OK many times the behaviour in the love stage will be similar to behaviours in the shell stage but the motivation behind it is entirely different because instead of trying to please someone else you are trying to please yourself.

So what does this have to do with rebuilding? Well as it happens many marriages are built on the foundation of immaturity with one partner stuck in the shell stage spending their whole life trying to please and do what others want. Eventually they get fed up with this shell existence as the inevitable pressures of personal growth become present creating a tremendous strain on their partner in the relationship.

	SHELL	REBEL	LOVE
VOCABULARY	<p>"What should I do?"</p> <p>"I'll do whatever you want"</p> <p>"Take care of me"</p> <p>"You're everything to me"</p> <p>"I only want you to be happy"</p>	<p>"If it weren't for you..."</p> <p>"I don't need your help!"</p> <p>"Leave me alone!"</p> <p>"I'll do it anyway."</p> <p>"If it feels good, do it!"</p>	<p>"I've considered the alternatives."</p> <p>"I'll take responsibility for my choice."</p> <p>"It may not work, but I want to try."</p> <p>"You and I can both enjoy ourselves."</p>
BEHAVIOUR	<p>Compliant, obedient.</p> <p>Caregiving (obliged)</p> <p>Consistent, predictable.</p> <p>Careful, no-risking</p> <p>Obligations, not choices</p>	<p>Self-centered, selfish</p> <p>Irresponsible, blames others.</p> <p>Erratic, unpredictable, careless</p> <p>Childish, "plays" with young folk</p> <p>Sports cars, flashy clothes, sex</p>	<p>Self-enhancing, respects others.</p> <p>Responsible, flexible, open.</p> <p>Willing to risk, learns from mistakes.</p> <p>Makes choices based on facts.</p>
self	<p>Being to trust self</p> <p>Being to take risks</p> <p>Begin to communicate openly</p> <p>Begin to accept responsibility</p> <p>Begin to try new behaviour</p>	<p>Try positive growth activities; classes, recreation, exercise, friendships, hobbies, community.</p> <p>Enter personal development/transformation work (with spouse?)</p> <p>Talk to spouse, friend, therapist</p> <p>Maintain moral, ethical balance</p>	<p>Work at self-awareness</p> <p>Work at self-acceptance</p> <p>Work at open, honest communication.</p> <p>Develop close, non-romantic friends</p> <p>Express anger assertively</p> <p>Maintain balance of independence</p>

GROWTH STEPS			and interdependence in close relationships.
partner	Encourage partner's growth. Lessen dependence on partner. Cooperate in therapy if needed. Prepare for turbulence when 'rebellion' starts!	Maintain stability, patience. Allow partner to grow up. Be available to talk with partner Encourage joint therapy. Recognise rebellion is against shell, not you!	

In preparation for our session please complete the following checklist.

1. I am aware of the leftovers I am carrying from the past relationshipS!
2. I am working on my leftovers rather than blaming others for them.
3. I am building relationships that will help eliminate my left overs.
4. I understand that I will have to change attitudes and awareness within me in order to rid myself of leftovers.
5. I am avoiding becoming emotionally involved with stray cats :-)

6. I have identified whether I am in the shell, rebel, or love stage in my growth and development
7. I have thought about my partner growth and development in terms of shell, rebel and love stages.
8. I have thought about my parent's development in terms of the shell, rebel, and love stages.
9. I have identified positive ways of rebelling in contrast to more negative, destructive forms of rebelling.
10. I can understand and accept those elements of my partner's behaviours which were related to the rebel stage.
11. I realise the shell, rebel and love stages are something that may happen several times in my life.
12. I am attempting to do the self-care needed to remain strong and stable
13. I will attempt to get rid of as many leftovers as possible before I get into another long- term, committed relationship.

