

Dr. Benzion Sorotzkin, Psy.D.

## POSTSCRIPT

1) Article: “Chemical Imbalance” – Section: Cultural resistance ... [In book P. 33]

Another example of cultural denial of childhood trauma can be found in a recent obituary:

Jean Kennedy Smith: Born in Brookline Massachusetts, Jean was “**raised in an atmosphere of privilege,**” said *The Guardian.com* - **though “her parents were barely on speaking terms through much of her early childhood,” because of her father’s philandering...** [Reported in *The Week*, July 3, 2020, p. 35, emphasis added].

A child growing up with parents who barely speak to each other because of the father’s philandering is considered to have “a privileged life” because her parents are rich and famous!!

2) “Role of Parents ...” - Other factors [P. 130]

Going off the *derech* is often attributed to “issues with *emunah*.” In my experience, the issues with *emunah* are usually the result of alienation from the parents, not the cause. See my article “A Tale of Two Mothers” under “*Hashkafah* issues.”

3) “Role of Parents ...” Range of parenting deficiencies [P. 134]

In an aptly titled book *Running on Empty*<sup>1</sup> Dr. Webb discusses what some didn’t get in childhood. What was not there that should have been: guidance, attunement; in some cases, love. Emotional neglect is an “invisible factor” from childhood which weighs upon people in adulthood, sapping their joy, making them feel disconnected or unfulfilled, or causing them to struggle with self-discipline. This factor from childhood is so subtle that it goes virtually unnoticed by everyone while it does its silent damage to people’s lives.

4) “Role of Parents ...” – Resistance to acknowledging ... [P. 142]

In a recent letter written to the “Ask Rabbi Shais Taub” column in *Ami Magazine* (July 8, 2020) an adult daughter powerfully articulated the pain of dealing with an abusive parent and the frustration of dealing with others who see her mother in a completely different light:

Dear Ami: I am writing as a daughter who has been estranged from her mother for some time. I thought it would be helpful to offer my point of view in order for people to understand how such a tragic situation comes about. The nature of a mother is to love and care for a child unconditionally. I have never experienced this.

My mother is an extremely difficult and verbally abusive person. As children, we lived in the shadow of her volatile and unstable personality. To outsiders, she appears mostly elegant, personable and charming; she reserves her mean behavior to those very close to her. As we started to leave the house and establish our own families, she felt her control

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<sup>1</sup> *Running on Empty: Overcome Your Childhood Emotional Neglect* by Dr. Jonice Webb with Dr. Christine Musello (2013).

over us weakening and did her best to put down our spouses and in-laws in front of us, thereby ensuring we remain loyal only to her. This started deepening the cracks in a weak relationship. She also created many rifts between us as siblings, and would rejoice when we didn't get along, because this meant we would be more loyal to her.

To describe life with a narcissistic mother to someone who has not experienced it is simply impossible. A mother who is narcissistic is the opposite of everything a mother should be, yet she expects her children to be there constantly for her and to give in to her unreasonable demands. If she finds her children not fulfilling her unrelatable expectations, she laments about them being disloyal and terrible children.

Every *simcha* I made, starting from the *bris milah* of my oldest son, to the wedding of my youngest daughter, was overshadowed by trauma and tears, as she made ridiculous demands ensuring that she was always the center of attention. As my children grew older, and I started to distance myself from her unhealthy ways and to establish boundaries to protect my sanity, my marriage and the calmness of my home, she would become increasingly more volatile, going so far as to try to ruin my children's *shidduchim*. I even heard her once say, when she was angry with one of my siblings, "I *daven* he should become sick with cancer."

I was once in the hospital recovering from a serious operation when she suddenly appeared in my room, pulled off my oxygen mask, and whispered loudly, "Maybe this will teach you to do *teshuvah*." If this seems extreme to you, let me explain that this is the bitter reality of children living with a narcissistic parent.

The only healthy way to maintain the relationship is with minimal contact, to ensure that your life and your relationship with your own spouse, children and grandchildren can flourish, and that you are not a prisoner of her excessively self-serving behavior.

When I encourage my adult children to try to maintain somewhat of a relationship with her, they often break down in tears, recalling the multitude of times they saw her taunt me, make me cry, and embarrass me in front of others. This was besides the times she would taunt them or make inappropriate comments to them. It remains a source of tremendous pain that I and my children don't have a grandmother to share their *simchos* because of the potential to be caused immeasurable hurt and destruction of their relationships with their spouses and children.

We are respectful to her, call to wish a good Yom Tov, and cautiously invite her to *simchos* (and hope she won't come and ruin them). But there cannot and will not ever be a warm contact and loving relationship. She is simply not capable. And as much as the tears prick our eyelids when we see a mother and daughter share a genuine moment of love, when we see an *Elter Bubby* cradling her great-grandchild, we choke them back and know this is something we will never experience with her.

I *daven* that all your readers should only know of happy and healthy relationships and bring *nachas* to themselves and Hashem.

### A Suffering Child

#### 5) Self-esteem .... – Feeling unique ... [P. 214]

Another important distinction between healthy and unhealthy self-esteem is the source of the esteem. The primary source of healthy self-esteem emanates from the person himself. In contrast those with inadequate self-esteem are driven to elicit esteem from others. In fact, that type of self-esteem is more accurately termed “other-esteem.” Gabor Maté<sup>2</sup> highlights the importance of the self being the primary source of self-esteem in the following comment.

... The world is much more ready to accept someone who is different and comfortable with it than someone desperately seeking to conform by denying himself. It's the self-rejection others react against, much more than the differences. So the solution for the adult is not to “fit in,” but to accept his inability to conform. The child's uniqueness has to first find a welcome in the heart of the parent. (p. 320)

#### 6) Self-esteem .... – Causes of unstable SE... [P. 215 footnote 3]

Gabor Maté in his above noted book, *Scattered*, makes a similar point regarding conditional acceptance:

... Most parents do not need to be taught how to love their children in the feeling sense, but we can all use practice in how to be actively loving toward them in day-to-day experience. ... (pp. 322-323). ... That the medication [for ADD] worked to calm and focus her certainly indicates that she does have a neurophysiological problem, but the episode also highlights the mother's problem: something in the mother tenses up when her daughter is tense. Her own anxieties are triggered so that she cannot remain calm, loving and attentive. Unless her daughter is well controlled, she cannot be accepting toward her. ... (p. 316)

#### 7) Honoring Parents who are Abusive – Addendum from Rav Dovid Cohen [P. 231]

ראה באגרות משה או"ח (א) סימן קעב: נשאלתי באחד שהיה חולה במחלת שטות והוא בבית החולים ונרפא אבל הרופאים אומרים שצ"ל שם עוד איזה שבועות תחת השגחתם כדי שלא יתקלקל ח"ו אם צריכים להוציאו משם כדי שיקיים מצות שופר שבבית החולים אי אפשר. והשבתי שלע"ד אין צריכים להוציאו כי על עשה גם אונס ממון יותר מחומש נחשב אונס לפוטרו ואולי גם בפחות מחומש ... וא"כ כ"ש זה שעדיף להאדם אף מחומש ממון ויותר שהיה מוציא להתרפא אף כל ממנו שנחשב אונס ממצות עשה דשופר ופטור.

וראה בספר "מסורת משה" עמ' שפו הערה יא': ... שו"ר באג"מ או"ח ח"א ס' קעב' שאם יש צער מחמת המצוה שהוא יותר משוויות של חומש מנכסיו אינו חייב באותו מצוה, וע"ע יו"ד ח"ב קעד ענף ד'.

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<sup>2</sup> *Scattered: How ADD originates and what you can do about it.* NY: Penguin (1999).

## 7) SSA - [P. 352]

The “unexamined assumptions” discussed by Gabor Maté are certainly impacted by conformity to the “politically correct” zeitgeist of the times. Solomon Asch’s experiments (1951-1956) on the dangers of group influence are well-known. The quasi-religious beliefs regarding SSA described in my article (that it is inborn, unchangeable, etc.) clearly reflect conformity. The insidious nature of conformity is alarmingly highlighted in recent studies extending Asch’s findings. These are described in a recent book:

Asch gathered student volunteers into groups and had them take a vision test. He showed them a picture of three lines of varying lengths and asked questions about how the lines compared with each other: which was longer, which one matched the length of a fourth line, and so on. His questions were so simple that 95% of students answered every question correctly. But when Asch planted actors in the groups, and the actors confidently volunteered the same incorrect answer, the number of students who gave all correct answers plunged to 25%. That is, a staggering 75% of the participants went along with the group's wrong answer to at least one question. The Asch experiments demonstrated the power of conformity... what they didn't tell us was **why** we are so prone to conform. What was going on in the minds of the kowtowers? Had their **perception** of the lines' length been altered by peer pressure or did they knowingly give wrong answers for fear of being the odd one out? For decades, psychologists puzzled over this question.

Today, with the help of brain scanning technology, we may be getting closer to the answer ... These early findings suggest that groups are like mind-altering substances. If the group thinks the answer is A, you're more likely to believe that A is correct, too. It's not like you're saying consciously, "Hmm, I'm not sure, but they think the answer's A, so I'll go with that." Nor are you saying, "I want them to like me, so I'll just pretend of the answer's A." No, you're doing something much more unexpected – and dangerous. Most of [the] volunteers reported having gone along with the group because "they thought that they have arrived serendipitously at the same correct answer." They were utterly blind, in other words, to how much their peers have influenced them.<sup>3</sup>

## 9) SSA – The oppressed become the oppressors [sex-change operation] [P. 359]

*Psychotherapy Networker* May/June, 2016, page 9: Letters:

... I still have concerns about dealing with clients who wish to transition. Is colluding with children and parents to administer body-altering hormones and surgeries acceptable? What if, as Margaret Nichols mentioned in her article "The Greatest Escape" (*Psychotherapy Networker* March/April), upwards of 70% of children change their mind and eventually

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<sup>3</sup> *Quiet: The power of introverts in a world that can't stop talking*, by Susan Cain, 2013, pp 90-92. [See also - <https://www.psychologicalscience.org/news/releases/following-the-crowd-brain-images-offer-clues-to-how-and-why-we-conform.html>]

accept their male and female bodies as they are? How difficult might it be for them to then revert back if at some point they change their minds? There's sufficient evidence that shows the brain isn't as gendered as we would like to think... How are we doing children and adults a favor if we blindly agree that they're who they say they are? **Would we enable a 90-pound anorexic to obtain liposuction because she believed she was fat** [emphasis added]? As a therapist with almost 30 years of experience dealing with body dysmorphic disorder, I can't help but wonder if our field may have lost its sense of boundaries.

Karen

*The Week* 2/12/16 P. 12

A Norwegian woman believes she was “born into the wrong species” and is in fact a cat trapped in a human’s body. The 20-year-old, known as Nano, realized she was a feline four years ago, and has since taken to padding around her house on her hands and knees, while wearing a fake cat’s tail, ears, and a pair of pink fluffy paws with which to groom herself. She frequently meows, and claims she has a feline ability to see in the dark as well as a cat’s loathing of water and dogs. “My psychologist told me I can grow out of it,” Nano says, “but I doubt it.”

#### 10) Refusing Therapy - [P. 390]

Gabor Maté in his above noted book, *Scattered*, makes an important point regarding psychiatric medications:

When you take a chemical substance, it alters how you feel internally and how you relate to the world. Even if these changes are positive, it is a major boundary violation for parents or schools, to insist that an unwilling child subject herself to fluctuations in her internal chemical states. ... **Children who feel good about themselves and secure in their bonding with their parents are unlikely to refuse the help of medications, if such help is truly needed.** (p. 311-312)

**Adults should have clear and limited expectations for what medication can do for them.** ... There was a general sense of disappointment that despite the pharmacological treatment, people continued to experience significant difficulties in their lives. Drugs, of course, do not alter the major issues a person needs to struggle with. In some cases they can be of tremendous help, and in others their benefits are more limited. In no case do they resolve the basic problems of low self-esteem, fear of intimacy, driven lifestyles and lack of self-knowledge. ... (p. 313) [emphasis added].