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Learning to Heal My Emotional Scars

I have been through several traumatic situations in my lifetime. These situations have led me to develop new techniques for emotional healing and helping others do the same. Over the years, I have been working constantly to overcome the hurt that I have felt in my life. Learning to do this was a hard and long process to go through, but by helping others deal with their pain, I have been able to heal myself.

My story

To understand what I am talking about, there is history that needs to be set up. When I was sixteen years old, I found out that I was pregnant. I decided to do the best thing for myself and my daughter and give her up for adoption. I went through a Catholic adoption agency because my family is religious and I wanted her to grow up in the same religion as myself. There were many moments that I thought I had made the wrong decision, because I missed her very much. Eventually, I learned to deal with the situation and see that I have made the best decision for everyone involved.

Learning Conversations

According to Harri-Augstein and Thomas, in their book Learning Conversations (1991), there are five useful differences in learning. I have seen four of these differences in my healing process:

1. Evaluating one's own learning. My evaluation has been over the course of many years, but this paper has really helped me to see that I have done a good job of figuring out where I am in my healing process. I have gone through all the

different moments that have helped me to heal, and I see that these events have really helped my learning process.

2. Learning as changes in thinking, feeling, perceiving, and doing. This is applicable to my process because the more I think about how I feel, the more I am able to deal with the pain. Learning has helped me to look at things from a different angle many times.

3. Learning as a process. Emotional healing is a never-ending process. Healing involves many stages usually beginning with denial and then eventually you learn to accept the situation. There is no other way to heal, than to go through many stages. The stages have to be gone through in order to get on with life.

4. Unintended learning. I never intended to learn what it was like to give up a child for adoption. This experience has helped me to deal with other emotional situations and the learning has developed over the years into what it is now. I used to be very carefree with life and I just took what came my way, now I tend to stop and really observe what is going on around me. I have learned to appreciate every little detail about life.

I had to enter many learning conversations with myself (Harri-Augstein 1991) to get through every moment of the adoption and healing afterwards. Communication between myself and others around me was essential to the healing of those closest to the situation. I was able to help my mother through the situation as much as she helped me. Together we had several learning conversations to help us get through everything together, because I could not go through it all alone.

My Four Creative Roles

According to Roger von Oech, author of A Kick in the Seat of the Pants, (1986), there are four creative roles, the explorer, the artist, the judge and the warrior. I have seen a lot of evidence of these four roles in my own learning.

After the birth and hospital stay, I had to find different ways to cope with the separation and knowledge that I might only see Anna one other time. This was the time for my explorer to come into play, which it did. I went to the adoption agency to do community service. The most helpful part of this work was going to the counseling group for birth mothers. This group had mothers of all ages that met at least once a month to help each other deal with the effects the adoption process. This was a time that I was not only learning from others, but they were learning from me as well. My closer friends and family could see a difference in my personality as I began to heal more each day. As my service continued, I had the opportunity to go with one of the counselors to talk to an eighth grade class about choices. This was part of their sex education class. The children had been discussing all the options that are out there for everyone; they knew that I was coming and what my situation was. When I was able to talk to them, I was able to get through the discussion without any great emotional moments. This was a breakthrough in my healing because I had kept from being too emotional for the first time.

In this constant exploration for ways to help deal with the emotions, my artist was able to take some action in the healing process. I had another opportunity to work with a group of mothers in a maternity home. This was very difficult for me because these women were all against adoption as an option. I had to use my explorer to find ways to reach them with my story, while using the artist in me to be creative. I had to stop and rethink the way that I was handling the healing. It became a time of learning to let go of how I was thinking. The mothers challenged me to think in reverse ways that I had

previously done. I had to look at their opinions from their angle rather than my own. This was the best time for my artist to help me handle the healing. There was finally one night that one of the mothers stopped and saw my side and how it was the best for me. I was so happy that I was able to get through to her, and she saw that maybe it would be an option for her as well. I think that my artist was the most important part that helped me to deal with letting go of the pain of giving up my daughter. My artist was able to help me adapt to the person that I had become and move on with my life. It took many months for the pain to ease, but it was worth the effort. The combination of my artist and explorer helped me to overcome the pain.

When I first read about the judge, I did not immediately think about how it applied to my learning event. After reading it over, I realized that the whole event relied heavily on the judge to make the final decision. I had to decide how to react to the situation and what emotions were not necessary to my healing. I went back to my first discussion over what to do about being pregnant. Having the baby was the only option I considered from the beginning, I had to go from there to decide if I would raise her or give her up. The judge in my personality played the most important role, because it was a major decision for everyone. I had never been faced with such a major decision before or since, but my family helped me to make the best choice. The judge had only a few months to decide what was best, because every step had to be well thought out and completed. Whatever decision that would finally be made, there was a risk involved. I risked depression by giving her up. I risked family conflict for my immediate family and some extended members of that family. One other risk was that if I raised my child, would she have a good life or not? I knew that I could not provide a wonderful life for a baby, when I was barely grown up myself. This was the final thought that pushed my judge towards adoption. It was the best

choice because I was not going to risk her having a deprived life because of my needs.

The warrior has helped me to deal with the pain over the years and get on with my life. She has helped me to help others deal with any emotional trauma that they are going through. She has not let me fall into depression over the pain nor has she let me forget that it still hurts sometimes. When I have days that I think about her all day and I get a little down, my warrior steps in and lets me see that I can continue on and the sadness is only a momentary state. This forces me to find people who need help handling life and giving emotional support whenever I can.

Moving on from learning

According to Glasser in his book on "Control Theory", we act upon things rather than react to things. As a person that has had to deal with many powerful emotions in her life, I have learned that I am the one and only person that is in control of my healing and learning. In order to help each other handle the situation that we face, we must be self-organized in our own thinking and coping abilities. It is this learning that has made me want to work with children, and eventually other teenagers, who are pregnant to help them with the emotional distress they may be feeling. It is important for me to tell my story to others, because the more I talk the more I heal. It has been that way for years.

Bibliography

Glasser, W.,M.D. (1986) Control Theory in the Classroom. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers.

Harri-Augstein, S., and Thomas, L., (1991) Learning Conversations. London: Routledge.

Von Oech, R., (1986) A Kick in the Seat of the Pants. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers.

Self-Evaluation

1. What did you learn in the process of doing this project?

I learned that learning does not just include the things that are learned through book reading and school. Learning is a process that is seen in every area of life. When I sat down to write the different parts of this paper, I realized that I have had many conversations with myself as I wrote it. It is true that I hear myself speaking in my head and that helps me to think through my paper. It was helpful to look at learning from the different creative roles, I never would have thought about my adoption experience in this way before.

2. What did you do that makes your project different from anything you could find elsewhere?

When I stopped to really think about the different things that I have learned about the adoption process and the healing that goes along with that, I realized that no one had ever told me about how I would feel. This project made me look at the events in my life as more than just events, everything is learning. I do not think I would have read about the creative roles in any other class. The roles were very helpful in helping to explain the healing I had to go through.

3. How did your project move you toward the goal of becoming more aware of how humans learn to learn?

My project has helped me to see that every person continuously learns throughout life. When we had class discussion about our papers, I was able to see that everyone was learning the material in a different way. Each person was able to make the material apply to their learning events. After each discussion, I had learned something and that was some evidence of human learning to learn. If you take away something new from every conversation or class, it is contributing to your continuous learning process.

4. How does your project move you toward the goal of helping others learn to learn?

This project made me think of ways to help others learn from looking at things from different angles. It has made me realize that every person has different styles of learning and that a teacher has to be able to teach in many different ways to reach all of the learners. I have seen that the learners help the teacher learn as much as the teacher helps them to learn. It is also important to learn from life experience.