EXPLORING YOUR FULL SEXUAL POTENTIAL, PART 17: CREATING FREEDOM IN CONVERSATIONS





In the previous part, we ended by saying: *"The more you focus on the feelings of the other person, the less you will be preoccupied with self-doubt and self-consciousness"*. But what if the other person is very self-indulgent and you find yourself becoming part of the wallpaper in the process, as you have done so often? How does one handle such a situation?

This question is a major challenge, because many men who experience Same-Sex Attractions (SSA's) found themselves in their childhood living in the women's world for far too long. More often than not, you were raised in a narcissistic-triade family constellation, where the mother (and often the father) was very concerned about own feelings, and where the children were treated as an extension of their own parental persona. Family life always seemed to revolve around the parental interests, expectations, plans and opinions.

1. An average family conversation

As a sensitive child living, as it were, in Squaw Camp (the American native Indian village dominated by the women of the tribe), you became a good little boy, fearing annihilation if you did not comply correctly. It has become a way of life and of self-image, and it has shaped your social skills. Or rather should I say, your *lack* of social skills. To understand this, let us look closely at the conversations going on in the family and see how the interactions may have went. These experiences have shaped the way you also handle similar conversations now as an adult, responding according to the same basic pattern.

> You: *"There is a great movie on TV tonight, 'American Beauty'. I heard that it is a movie you must have seen."*
>
> Mom: *"It is been a long day for me. I don't know, maybe the movie is too long."*
>
> You: *"Yeah, but I would like to see it. It is a great movie."*
>
> Mom: *"I have been busy all day, there are so many things to do. I was on the phone with your Aunt Mildred this afternoon, and she is so fatiguing. And now I feel how even with*

you, people are draining me."

Then she sits back, sighs, and waits for you to give attention to her predicament.

Before you know it, you have become wall-paper, you are back to your usual good-little-boy place in family-life, and you switch off. In such a family, we see how the child has to become the parent, and how the parent can take a back seat and be diapered as though they were the child (this phenomenon is called parentification of children).

How do you change these communications, in order to gain more self-esteem?

2. The different subjects in the conversation

If we look closely, you will see that we are dealing with three different subjects. Let us analyze them.

There is the primary trigger (in this case the movie), then we see your mom (or dad or other person) throwing in his/her feelings, but there are also your feelings about the trigger. So we have three subjects, or lines, to talk about:

1. The primary trigger

2. The feelings of Mom/Dad

3. Your feelings.

What are we going to talk about next, after line 2 where Mom (Dad) threw in her (his) feelings?

As a good little boy in Squaw Camp, you have been drilled to proceed onto line 2: the feelings of Mom/Dad. You do so almost automatically. You have been trained that way. Your upbringing was more or less a puppy training course, and you received a bone (a small one at that; no, make that merely a biscuit) for complying to the expectations. Was the biscuit big enough for you? Who cares? After all, we are discussing line 2 (the feelings of Mom/Dad), are we not? And that line is not about you. Never will be, either. After all, this family game goes by the name of 'Home, Sweet Home'. It has always been that way.

What are your options? Usually you feel you have ONE option, continue with line 2. But then again, you were puppy-trained that way. Bow wow!

3. A new look on subjects

These events from childhood have shaped your repertoire of reactions. You may find yourself repeating old patterns of communication. Now that you are an adult, you may see that there are also two other lines you can follow through: lines 1 and 3.

Meaning, you can go back to the original trigger and expand further on the actual subject (ignoring or postponing line 2), or you can throw in line 3: your feelings. Never did that, did you? Nope. Can you hear that voice?

> *"Behave son!"* (Mom threw in line 2!) *"How could you be so disappointing? How could you treat your parents so? How could you be so insensitive, so cruel, so selfish, after all your folks did for you?"*

From a rational point of view, however, there is no reason why you should automatically continue on line 2 (the feelings that the trigger stirred in Mom/Dad/the other). You are fully entitled to refer to line 1 or 3. And you are fully entitled to do it as automatically and self-confidently as the other person throws in their good old line 2.

You will be amazed with the results! Especially since you are a grown-up now, one who does not have to accept blackmailing, financially or emotionally or otherwise, any more. You have all the right in the world to go back to the original trigger or to elaborate on the feelings that the trigger gave YOU.

If you need a poker face to get away with it, do so. You will rock the boat, especially in families in which this disfunctional behavior has become deeply ingrained. Or at least, ingrained in your mind. Because it is you who is habitually reacting to line 2, when in fact there are three lines to which one can react. And each one is as equally legitimate as the other. That would mean a deliberate change of communication habits, and a change of hierarchy.

Usually one tends to react to line 2 (the feelings of Mom/Dad/the current other). Imagine if you complain about the communication or actually change it by talking about the movie or your own feelings. Will this change the communication? No. Why not?

Because the other person will throw in yet another line 2: their emotional reaction to your complaint about their line 2. And so, there will be more discussion about their feelings. Their feelings were initially caused by the trigger, but to make things worse, their feelings are now also triggered about your reactions to their line 2.

So, now they have two different things to get upset by: the tiresome movie and your tiring behavior. And the conversation is all about the narcissists.

The solution is yet again to talk about the original trigger (line 1) or to talk about *your feel-*

ings about the trigger (line 3). In doing so, you will avoid talking about line 2, and (most importantly) about your annoyance about their self-centeredness.

Their world is all about them, it is a narcissist's favorite subject. If you do not want to talk about them all the time, or about their feelings (self-centered or otherwise), then change the subject. Are you allowed to do so? Yes. Lines 1 and 3 are totally legitimate in each and every conversation.

4. A new twist to the conversation

The discussion may now go like this if you go back to line 1 during the discussion:

> The other person*: "I am so bored by this movie. What a stupid movie. What a waste of time. Why do we have to look at these sorts of movies. You know how much I hate doing that."*
>
> *You: "The most interesting part is the change of plot, when all of a sudden the main character is playing tricks behind her back. How amazing! I didn't see that one coming. No wonder the newspaper gave the director 5 stars."*

Notice how the conversation is not about the other person's feelings any more, but about the objective reality of the ratings that the movie got in the newspapers. In other words, other people's feelings have also been brought into the equation.

Your conversation partner can now do two things: (a) join the human race or (b) become hostile. If he/she chooses (a), he/she will stick to the negative view about the movie but will also talk about other people instead of merely about him/herself.

> (a) The other: "*Hmm, the director is certainly not bad, but I have seen this sort of plot twist before. Rather predictable, don't you think?"*
>
> You: "*No, I didn't expect this. I love the way the actress played her role. So convincing."*

But the narcissist may also become hostile, or manipulative, or blackmailing:

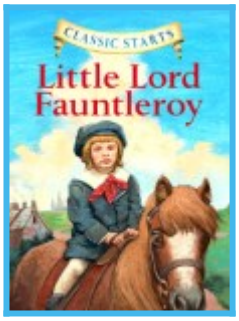
> *(b)* The other*: "Well, I can sense when no one cares about me. Never mind, I have my tablets upstairs which I still have to take. I think I need to withdraw. The doctor told me yesterday to see to my health."*
>
> You: *"Yes, see you tomorrow".*

Note how in (b) you are not rewarding her line 2 as the most important or only subject this evening, but are choosing to indulge in other options too. A narcissist will not accept this on the spot, but slowly he/she will learn that the world is bigger than line 2. And the good thing is, you have not become the therapist, spelling it out. You have just stuck to the original trigger or to your feelings about the trigger (in this case the film). In time, the other person may come around, because you are not rewarding that behavior. This habit may now start fading out.

5. The therapist pose

There is one big pitfall in changing the conversation: before you know it, especially if you are highly sensitive and caring, you may decide to become the therapist, to spell it all out, to help the other person see their behavior, to help them realize how they are damaging the interaction and ultimately themselves in the process.

Fool!



This is such a codependent thing to do! It reminds me of Little Lord Fauntleroy (an American novel character, 1885, filmed in 1921, 1936, 1980, 1995: trailer) where a parentified child (as explained above) charges in to save the day, to make himself worthwhile and indispensable. He becomes the perfect American sweet and adorable boy. In doing so, he finds himself subduing all English harsh nobility and enlightening the world. He demonstrates no anger about being regarded as wall-paper as he unselfishly diapers full grown adults more than they have managed to manipulate others into doing already.

The novel was a huge success at the time, and many American adults were as keen about the novel as they were about Shirley Temple some years later (another heavily parentified child). Sadly, the children do so at their own expense. Their own emotional needs are not being met; these needs are not even being recognized.

One film critic who was reacting to the 1995 remake, recognized this, saying:



Click on the image for the trailer

"This is a really silly book that caused a generation of little boys to have to suffer through long hair and white lace collars. Cedric, aka Little Lord Fauntleroy, is a goody good good little boy. His mother is perfect too. I bet thousands of little boys in the 1880's wanted this book to disappear."

Part of becoming a well-balanced adult is learning the art of taking care of yourself. You often find that no one else is doing it. You may have copied parental attitudes towards your own inner self, and may discover some day that you, too, have ignored the interests of that young man who you used to be and who is still there inside of you. There is only one person you can change in this world, and that is you.

The predicament of parentified, compliant children is loneliness. You may have been in Squaw Camp for far too long, living up to the expectations of others. Learn to leave that camp, and to ride with the male braves the way you want to. It is the most profound wish of every boy, it is their deepest fulfilment. The prairies are yours to conquer in full gallop. In doing so, perhaps you may at last breathe the air of freedom to venture into new behaviors. Good little Lord Fauntleroy sadly never left the stables, living a life confined to fulfilling the needs and appeasing the whims of others.

6. Creating freedom

You can now start feeling more free to decide during conversations how much attention you wish to give to other people's feelings, and to what extent you also express who you are yourself. You do not have to ignore narcissists all the time, but you need to learn to choose how much time is shared over their feelings, and how much attention is given to yours.

And you must do this deliberately, remembering at all times that the original trigger and your feelings about this trigger are as equal and worthy subjects of conversation as are the opinions, feelings and stories of the conversation partner. It will heighten your self-esteem. Surprisingly, people will start respecting you.

You have become a man.

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To be continued.

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