EXPLORING YOUR FULL SEXUAL POTENTIAL, PART 26, "THE DANCE OF DEFENSIVE DETACHMENT WITH ITS COUNTERPART: SAME-SEX ATTRACTIONS"

Matthew from Nebraska reached out by email the other day, asking *"What is about the need for external male affirmation that still creeps up now and then?"* He went on to explain that on some days he still feels inferior, or as he calls it *'something other than maleness'*. His most vital question at this time is: "*Why do I still have the desire and yet at the same time hatred for certain men?"*

Matthew struck gold. Well done, Matthew. The predicament that he has stumbled upon, constitutes the core of understanding Same-Sex Attractions (SSA's). It is called Defensive Detachment, a weird complex which consists of two opposing feelings bubbling up at the same time. Exploring these feelings is like going down a rabbit-hole.

What you will find is that these emotions are double-hearted. You can never get it right. You crave but you hate, you need but you repel, you long to be far away but need to be close, you spell out your needs but revere in proudly turning your back. In this article, we will investigate how these muddled-up feelings can be traced back to deeply ingrained childhood experiences seeping into current daily life and oozing over many relationships with significant others.

1. *Defensive detachment*

On the website 'Gingertonic' (2018), the coaches Kate and Dids write,

> "*Defensive detachment is the way we instinctively protect ourselves from being hurt by separation, rejection, humiliation, or abandonment. We are designed as human beings to form close psychological attachments to other human beings, in fact, our healthy psychological development relies on it. But, when those attachments are not as strong or as deep as they need to be, or when they are used against us, our brain steps in with a mechanism to protect us from what can hurt, kind of like a, 'I'll dump you before you can dump me' syndrome."*

It tends to occur when we have been hurt, humiliated or abandoned by those we are designed to be most closely attached to (children to their parents for example). Children naturally seek to be attached to their parents, it is a genetic urge. Whilst healthy parents will nurture and guide them through life in the context of unconditional love, it is the strong emotional attachment which keeps the child's heart soft and open to relying and daring to depend on others.

However, when a parent uses or abuses the child's attachment needs, through acts of humiliation, exclusion, fear or conditional love, the child can, over time, become defensively detached from that parent. It happens for example when a parent loses his patience and uses his power against the child in some way, usually by issuing a threat, by shouting, or by withholding love. The parent may win the battle for that moment, but it's a hollow victory. So sayeth Kate and Dids from the UK.

2. Feeling less than other men

Matthew said in his email that our previous article (part 25) on the subject-object relation rings a bell. He added,

> "*The subject-object mechanism makes a lot of sense. The projection of our being less than another guy objectifies him, turns him into an object. A lot of guys feel inferior in some ways, right? But with those with SSA's, it runs much deeper and more than we consciously realize. We have some sort of wounding or perception that cut us off from male identification at a very young age.*"

Many people have difficulty in realizing the fact that impressions from childhood can still color the moods and feelings of everyday life. Matthew went on to say,

> "*Speaking for myself, I have faint memories of this – not any one specific event, but a pattern of behavior based on the dynamic with my parents that allowed itself to manifest.*"

It occurs quite often that people who are made aware of events from childhood say that it hardly rings a bell at all. But after some time, memories will bubble up.

> "*I hated my father, or at least his hostile and volatile temper that was at the same time very childlike. He had fits of rage. I was terrified. In fear, I would run away from him. Mom was always the protector. And she also then belittled my father for his behavior, teaching me to "never act like your father!" I hated him and didn't want to be near him".*

When a boy due to uneasy circumstances begins to reject his father for his behavior or attitude, the boy slowly starts floating or drifting instead of feeling comforted and secure.

> *"I felt like I was in some kind of special 'club' (read: 'Squaw Camp') that sheltered me from the scary and obnoxious world of boys AND (this is key here) elevated me to be better than them in my smug sense of self-satisfaction. It goes beyond competing to be liked, or admired, or to perform better than other guys. It's an elevated sense of self that says "I have no desire or interest to be like you, or to be in your crowd at all. You are a disgusting and cruel species and I am nothing like that."*

3. Understanding parents who are sufferers themselves

In this fragment above, Matthew clearly explains the mechanism of his defensive detachment from his father. This man suffered from bouts of irrational behavior in which he was totally out of control. Matthew's fear grew as his father's irrational behavior repeated itself. At that age, Matthew was too young to see that he was dealing with an emotionally wounded individual (his father). Over time, Matthew detached.

First, the child detaches from his father (or rather fails to adequately attach to him), then we observe that he will start detaching from everything that his hostile or emotionally repulsive father specifically stands for. As the boy becomes older, we see how this detachment spreads like an oil spill onto other males, his peers. He will detach and will fail to demonstrate any attaching behavior. No energy will be invested into his peers; it is as if he has given up before even trying. He will turn his back and cling to his mother as he has done from birth onward. Letting go of her feels insecure and the distant world of men will not become a goal to actively reach.

Although those peers have done nothing wrong to him, he expands his detachment onto them anyway. He pushes them away and does not invest sufficient effort into them. He will not have any confidence in the interaction and inevitably, rough-and-tumble will not be his game. For him, it feels like a waste of time.

But the truth of the matter is that he doesn't know how. After all, they never felt like they were his crowd anyway and he has never practiced the skills of interaction. To the contrary, he will become a loner and will practice the skills of doing nice things on his own. He will grow up in splendid isolation. Aunts will kiss our clever boy when they come around for tea, but his peers won't choose him on their team at the sports ground.

An emotionally hurt parent can produce an emotionally hurt child. Generally, the parent does not realize that truth and is horrified if he/she is confronted with it. It is not what he/she set out to do.

Detaching as Matthew did from an unpredictable parent who at times was out of control, can successfully be overcome at an adult age, but the situation becomes much more complicated when the detachment starts spreading onto others.

4. The emergence of Same-Sex Attractions

If the attitude becomes generalized, if negative or ambivalent feelings towards males and maleness become the daily state of mind, then the foundation is laid for acquiring same-sex attractions (SSA's). These feelings start to function as a coping mechanism to counteract the negative feelings which are also present. They will bring comfort and a very private sense of joy. The child will connect with maleness after all, for that is the way that all humans are programmed, but the connection will only be in his mind. It will not be a living reality. A double bind is emerging.

5. Anger

Mat has more to say. He goes on to write:

> *"I have an elevated sense of being, yet ironically inferior. Deep down, I know that I want more than anything to be your typical guy. Describing the above brings me to my next thought: anger. Anger is something that I have struggled with. But you don't see it much. My anger with others is covered up with a smile and a submission to keep the peace."*

Notice how Matthew, who suffers from double-binds, is now creating a double-bind himself. On the one hand he feels anger and aggression but on the other hand he does all he can to keep the peace and show no hostility. After all, experiencing aggression and keeping the peace are quite at odds with each other.

We can safely say that people who have acquired double-binds at an early age grow up to become the Kings and Queens of double-binds themselves. They do not only suffer from them but they also re-create them, making their predicament more and more intricate. And often feeling more and more gloomy by the day. Remember how Alice fell through a rabbit-hole? Well, so did Matthew, and he became a King of Cards.

He writes,

> *"I feel an injustice—for example, I may feel that those I know only like me for what I can do for them; if I didn't do those things they would leave me. So I go above and beyond, even when it's not warranted, hoping someday they will recognize my achievements*

> *and come running to me and hold me in their arms. I need them to thank me. When they don't, I brood and get angry. I throw things when no one is around. I take my anger out on inanimate objects."*

Throwing things around when no one is around? Like as in irrational behavior? Where have we heard that before?

In this instance, we read Matthew describing a spell of unpredictable outbursts which (although he doesn't realize it) is exactly the agitated behavior his father managed to exhibit at times, so he told us. There is a difference though because his father directed his agitation at his son or in his son's presence, but Matthew makes sure the victim is only an inanimate object. An improvement over the generations, albeit a small one.

6. The emergence of jealousy

Matthew goes on to write:

> "*I want so badly to go off on a guy who I perceive mistreats me or doesn't respect me. Why? Because deep down, I feel he has something over me. I feel he's forever better than me because he hasn't a care in the world. He's confident in everything and his sexuality. And it's not fucking fair. He should suffer the way I have! I should be like him!"*

Jealousy, my dear Matthew, the oldest curse in the book. And it is consuming him. Its depth is as great as his anger. If he were not to experience anger, he would no doubt not experience jealousy to this degree. There is also a hint of despair in his feelings at this point as well, he is not doing great. And it is magically at this point that his body may start soothing his despairing mind by means of the potent chemical called Testosterone. Matthew may find his body sexualizing his despair, his hope, his secret feelings and admiration for men who appear to have no worries in the world. He will find himself experiencing a deep desire for that kind of a man. The desire feels good, and negative feelings will fade as sexual need and craving take over, making him feel elevated and potent again. He is transforming from a victim of confusion into a man of potency who can master his environment and reconcile his mind-frame.

His feelings of impotence over the situation will be soothed by a spell of sexual fantasy and perhaps orgasm: the impotence is healed. At least for the time being, until the cycle starts all over again.

7. Low maintenance children may receive no maintenance at all

Parents who are unknowingly distant or negative toward their child in his formative years, often fail to realize that they are threatening the incredibly precious bond between them and

the child, and all too soon, the hurt child will become distant with a *'who cares, you can't hurt me anyway'* attitude. The child becomes aloof and appears almost to have become indifferent.

This indifference is confusing for the parent because now that the child appears to play with his toys without a worry in the world, the parent does not get any negative feedback on his/her parental behavior. The parental irrational frenzy or indifference goes unchecked, only to be repeated over and over again. If the child shows protest behavior, he may very well be stigmatized as a naughty child, a difficult kid. The child may be taught not to follow his (negative) feelings, and in this way, the child's feelings of being irrelevant will be reinforced.

8. Feeling like a nowhere man

At adult age, as we see in Matthew, he may very well relive his childhood feelings of being irrelevant, of not counting, of not being significant, and his old feelings of despair will re-emerge. He may not realize that the depth of his despair stems from very old experiences and that the depth is reinforced by an ancient mood, a time-worn gramophone record that apparently will start playing old tunes, all by itself.

Matthew is suffering. It is difficult to make profound sadness go away. The strategy that his toddler-aged mind created (defensive detachment) may paint his whole world blue. If he doesn't look out, he may grow into a sad and bitter old man.

But there is hope. Seeking comfort and support from the external physical world or a spiritual one will most probably not do the trick. It is coming to grips with that old gramophone record player that will give the energy. Because that is where the source of defensive detachments are to be found.

They have grown into a habit and the grooves of the old record have become a deep furrow, inevitably leading to misery. Matthew needs to change his tune, as he very well knows, but he fails to know how. It is quite simple: he needs to see how his defensive detachments keep on occurring on a day-to-day basis. It is not just a past memory, it has become daily life to do so, and to seek safety by repeating that defensive maneuver.

Detaching is the oldest and safest trick in the book. It works like a charm, keeping harm away. It saved the toddler, and has perhaps become a way of life. But who will soothe you when you are old and lonely? After all, you have done a great deal of detaching.

9. Conclusion

Matthew wants to hear yes about his person. But he is saying no to others around him. People don't hate you, you hate them. Once he realizes this fact and sees that he is the one who is continuously detaching, his on-look on the world will start changing.

To be continued.

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