

INTRODUCTION

LOOKING FOR YOUR SELF IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES

How to Recognize Your Authentic Self to Live on Your Terms

Ph.D.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

GLOSSARY

YOU NEED THIS BOOK IF YOU

- *Want to be able to trust your “gut” when making decisions
- *Become confused about which side of yourself is the real you
- *Want to find your authentic self
- *Want fulfilling, satisfying and emotionally honest relationships
- *Have ongoing family drama or relationship problems you can't seem to fix
- *Want to avoid making the same mistakes over and over again
- *Are currently experiencing anger, anxiety or emotional distress you don't understand
- *Want to learn why other people behave as they do
- *Are confused by a big life change or upheaval
- *Want to learn how to respond, not react

INTRODUCTION
...65,000 Hours

After one particularly long day, I calculated that over the past 35 years I have spent at least 65,000 hours sitting in an office chair talking to people about their lives. I'm not complaining. To me there is nothing more interesting than figuring out other people's problems, and nothing more gratifying than watching my patients learn to live a more satisfying life.

I wrote LOOKING FOR YOUR SELF IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES because I wanted others to put into practice what I have learned from witnessing the suffering and joys of my patients. I studied a lot about psychology in school for many years, but I've learned even more from listening to them. I have had the rare privilege of being exposed to the most intimate emotions that people experience. I get to see what others do not see. I thank my patients every day for the trust that they place in me. As a result of that trust, I have gained invaluable insights into what makes people tick. I see the enormous significance of small things, and the emotional patterns that people unknowingly retrace again and again. I see people who are in pain, relationships in jeopardy, and patients who are mystified by their own behavior. I also see awareness awakened, lives turned around, and relationships restored. My patients have shown me the answers that will change your way of life. Now I want to share that information with you.

Come sit in my chair and you will learn a whole new psychology that finally fits the American way of life. I realized that the essential skill we must learn in order to untangle our complicated lives is *how to recognize our authentic emotions*. After years of studying, self-examination, clinical experience, and reflection, I

created the New American Psychology to provide my patients with a completely different way of viewing their inner emotional lives.

Reading this book is like picking up a new pair of glasses and being able to see yourself and others in a completely different way. You will learn how to avoid the automatic, unthinking reactions that create problems in your life, and how to make thoughtful decisions with positive consequences. Once you start being true to your emotions, you'll have more satisfying relationships with other people and the world becomes a warmer and friendlier place.

This book is designed to help you by providing a new approach to everyday well-being. It will meet you where you are, whether things are basically OK, or your life has gone seriously off the rails.

In LOOKING FOR YOUR SELF IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES, I illustrate how The New American Psychology works in real life by including case histories of real people dealing with genuine problems.* You will hear men, women, and children of different backgrounds tell their stories. You will hear what they have to say about love, hate, anger, fear, sex, and pain. You will overhear parents despairing about their kids, and kids fuming about their parents. You will learn about other people's successes and defeats; about their problems with family, fidelity, and work; about the relationships they hold dear and the ones they lost. And you will discover that, despite outward differences, these people are a lot like you. They will change your life forever.

Sincerely,

"Dr. V"

*I changed all the names and identifying information in case histories to protect the privacy of my patients.

CHAPTER 1

What No One Has Ever Taught You: *...And What My Patients Have Taught Me*

LOOKING FOR YOUR SELF IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES will provide a new way for you to understand why people behave the way they do, and why they say the things they say. This includes you. Even counterintuitive or self-destructive behaviors have their own logic, and can be explained using the concepts in this book.

Lisa's Story: The Good Girl Goes Bad

When Lisa first stepped into my office, I was confused about why she was there. She had left me a vague message about its being time to “talk to someone”, but I did not know what she wanted to talk about. Lisa was cheerful, outgoing, nicely dressed, and seemed like the kind of loving mother who would listen to your problems and give you good advice. Why was she coming to me for help?

In fact, Lisa was all these things. She made everyone else feel comfortable and seemed very content. But I am no longer surprised when the words and pictures don't match – that is, when a patient comes to me looking fine but actually feeling very distressed inside, or looking fragile and haunted but actually being very self aware. I soon learned that Lisa had a secret.

I asked my usual opening question: “So, how can I help you today?”

After several false starts and the sudden appearance of tears, Lisa told me she actually felt frantic inside. Sometimes she thought about just getting into her

car and driving and driving...but then she would remember her two children and keep steering her car toward the mall, the grocery store, the toy store, or her lover's house.

Nothing surprises me anymore. Although Lisa considered herself happily married, she had taken up with a younger man she described as "completely inappropriate." She couldn't even explain what she saw in him. But neither could she stop sneaking off to see him. She knew she was risking her marriage and entire family life, and worried incessantly about being found out...but she couldn't stop.

It did not take long to find out that Lisa had always been The Good Girl in her family. Being good became even more important when Lisa's older brother started talking back to their parents and getting into trouble – crashing the car, selling drugs, staying out all night, and upsetting their parents so much that their father yelled constantly and their mother spent much of her time crying. She did not have any emotional energy left for Lisa, who felt she should give her parents as few problems as possible to make up for her brother's behavior.

Lisa's brother continued to be ornery and destructive, getting into scrapes with the police and taking risks with behavior that would land him in jail if he got caught. Lisa's parents lived in fear for him, but no amount of yelling or crying persuaded him to change.

Lisa was the angel in the family. She turned into a lovely teenager who behaved politely, soothed her mother, never upset her father, went to church, got good grades, became a cheerleader, and volunteered at the food pantry on

weekends. After graduating from high school, she went to a nearby college - so she could come home and visit her mother – where she performed well and got a reputation as a “goody – goody”. Having learned from her brother’s example, she would not go near drugs or alcohol, and developed a small circle of goody-goody friends, one of whom, Kent, she married after graduation.

Lisa’s parents were ecstatic. Lisa had a beautiful wedding – except for her brother, who drank too much, gave a profane toast, was rude to the guests, and threw up on the dance floor. Although Lisa’s parents were beyond mortified, they both felt this was not the place to have a family scene. They soldiered on as if nothing was wrong until Lisa’s brother passed out, which was a huge relief for everyone.

After getting married, Lisa followed a well-worn path. She had two beautiful children, went to all their recitals and games, became a PTA president, was active in her church, sent cards and gifts to her in-laws, and was polite and supportive to everyone. She maintained a spotless home, where she did the laundry on Mondays, ironed on Tuesdays, changed the sheets on Wednesdays, washed the blinds on Thursdays, and vacuumed on Fridays. That is, until she met TJ.

Lisa was at a birthday dinner for a PTA board member when she saw TJ sitting alone at the bar. Her own reaction amazed her. It was as if her body had been dormant for 38 years and it suddenly woke up. It was clear that TJ, unlike Lisa’s husband, was not a goody-goody. He was probably ten years younger than Lisa, and had long, wavy hair to below his collar. He was wearing a

sweatshirt with the sleeves cut off which carelessly revealed his muscles and broad chest. His boots and jeans did not indicate what kind of work he did, and Lisa thought he had an air of mystery around him. She kept glancing at him surreptitiously, trying not to let the other PTA mothers see what she was doing. Finally, her cheeks burning, she boldly walked past him, pretending she had to go to the bathroom. After hyperventilating in the bathroom for a few minutes, she walked past him the other way. He glanced up from his beer and looked at her narrowly. Lisa smiled brightly and returned to her table, astonished at what she had just done.

After lunch was over, Lisa dawdled at the table looking in her purse for her keys, certain that TJ was watching her. Her heart was beating as fast as a rabbit's. She left the restaurant as casually as she could, and walked to her car.

"Ma'am, if you'd excuse me, I wonder if I could trouble you for a ride to the auto body shop?" said a deep voice behind her. It was TJ, and that was the moment Lisa lost her mind. She answered politely that it would be no trouble at all, and they ended up driving directly to TJ's house.

Lisa returned home an hour later than usual, and no one noticed. She was self-aware enough to realize this incident was completely disconnected from her normal suburban life, but she has no clue why she had just done what she did – and why she wanted to do it again. Her own behavior made absolutely no sense to her. Where was it coming from?

Lisa had been secretly meeting TJ for several weeks before she scared herself into coming to see me. I began Lisa's treatment the same way I do with

any new patient - I ask them to write their autobiography. From it, I can tell a great deal about the emotional patterns and pressures in a person's life. After reading her autobiography, I suspected what Lisa's problem was, but knew that she had to come to understand it herself. My job was to guide her through the process.

When we reviewed her history, Lisa at first talked about how loving her parents and husband were and how lucky she felt. After a few weeks of setting the groundwork, Lisa came to her fourth session with a completely different demeanor. She was furious. I had never seen her angry before, so to me this was a good sign. To Lisa, being angry was very upsetting. How could she be so ungrateful, selfish and weak? What was her problem, anyway? She had a great life. How could she want anything more?

It turned out that the new Lisa wanted to go see an R-rated sexy movie and Kent was adamantly opposed. He could not understand why his wife was acting so out of character. Lisa had married Kent specifically because he was mild-mannered, conservative, and devoted to her. All of a sudden she was enraged with him for the same qualities. It was if a dam had broken. Stories poured out in treatment about how meek, annoying, predictable, and unexciting Kent was. And of course, TJ was everything that Kent was not.

Together we reviewed Lisa's family history as The Good Girl, how she had always done everything that was expected of her, and how her brother had gotten all the attention because he was a pain. Being The Good Girl was not everything it was cracked up to be. Finally, Lisa realized that, when she was

honest with herself and allowed herself to feel her true emotions, she was hopping mad and tired of the self-denial that came from being good all the time. TJ had ignited feelings inside her she had not even known she had. There was an explanation for her bizarre, potentially dangerous behavior.

My goal was to continue working with Lisa so she could learn to use her anger in a more productive way. Her relationship to TJ was not due to some character flaw or immorality. It had to do with hiding her real emotions from herself all these years and finally being unable to shove them down any longer. She was angrier at her family than she realized, had learned to suppress her emotions to make up for her brother and please her parents, and had continued the same pattern in her marriage to Kent. Lisa now needed to restructure how she connected to all the people in her life. My hope was that she could learn to be more emotionally honest with her family and her husband, learn to solve problems in a more constructive way, and that, before too long, Lisa would no longer need TJ as an outlet for her hidden emotions.

Improve Your Life

My patients come to me when their lives are falling apart and they don't know what to do or where else to turn. Some blame themselves for having a flawed character or negative personality traits. They say they are "forgetful" or "weak", or "lazy", or "selfish", labeling themselves in negative ways rather than examining the emotions behind their actions. Some become so alienated from their

authentic feelings that they develop chronic rage, depression, or anxiety, and don't know how to get better. Some feel nothing at all – or *try* not to feel anything by getting into bad habits, like drinking too much. Others find themselves acting in bizarre, even frightening ways, like having sex with strangers, shopping or gambling excessively, or destroying important relationships. Many wonder if they are crazy or self-destructive. They aren't crazy, and most often they do not even need medication. They are cracking under the strain of denying their true feelings.

If you keep doing the same thing, you will keep getting the same results. Similarly, you can't fix something if you don't know what is broken. I know what is broken and how to fix it. It's not that I am some genius or something. It's far simpler: my patients told me what needs to be done. What the thousands of patients confirmed over and over again is that their usual approach to life does not work any more. Fortunately, there is an approach that does.

This book will help you to:

- Recognize the power of your family, the role you play, and how you carry that role into your marriage, your parenting, and your everyday life.
- * Create a strong sense of self by overcoming ingrained, outdated behavior.
- Understand what motivates others, including members of your own family.

- Overcome your fears – including the fear of your deepest emotions.
- Be alone but not lonely.
- Learn the value of distance in a relationship, and how to let it breathe.
- Recognize your authentic feelings, and use them to power your way to a more satisfying life.
- Discover that anger is your best friend, and learn how to use it to solve life's problems.
- Discover that emotional dynamics rather than a flawed personality are responsible for why you do what you do.
- See how authentic emotional exchanges are the basis of satisfying, long-term relationships.
- Learn from your mistakes, and discover how to earn forgiveness with sincere contrition and reparation.
- Anticipate and avoid unthinking reactions that get you into trouble.
- Connect with others in new, healthy ways that are based on emotional honesty and mutual respect.
- Learn how to be a better partner and, if you have children, a better parent.

Most importantly, you will learn to set yourself free from the ties that bind you.

It is possible – more than possible: necessary – to free yourself from early learned behavior, and to release the shame and guilt that keep you stuck in dependent relationships based on obligation or subservience. Later in this book

Our Family Role

Some people think personal independence is at odds with the common good. Others are afraid of independence, because they think personal freedom only comes with a high price. I believe all these false impressions of independence exist because being independent does not come easy. The default position of all human beings is dependency. Babies are born helpless – totally dependent upon others to meet their most basic needs. Then our dependency is reinforced at an early age because it suits the adults around us. It is imprinted upon us while we are most vulnerable. We learn to read the emotions and actions of our parents, and to do what it takes to please them and not make them mad. As we get older, we get our marching orders from them. The more we do as we are told, the more we are rewarded.

No wonder we become focused on pleasing our parents. We need them to survive. They have all the power. In order to stay alive, we learn to see ourselves through their eyes. Everyone does it. It's as essential as food and water. We are dependent on our family, and must learn what they want and how to please them in order to get what we need as well as reduce our own stress. Our parents create a family role for us, and we stick to it. If siblings are in the mix, we learn certain ways to accommodate them, too.

Compliance has many rewards:

The first and most basic benefit is safety. When we behave correctly, we feel connected to our parents and protected by them.

A second benefit is love. The more acceptance we gain for our good behavior, the more we feel loved and included.

A third benefit is feeling less doubt and anxiety about making decisions. When we live up to the expectations our parents have for us, we are more certain about what to do. The more we fulfill our role, the less fear we feel. The world makes more sense when we do as our parents say.

The imprint of our family role is never completely erased from our psyche. Even when we grow older, we still experience less fear when we stick to the script. Some people spend their entire lives believing that “father knows best.” In truth, all parents are “some good and some bad.” Even parents with the very best of intentions will do some damage in the process of bringing up their children. How many parents want to help their children grow up to be independent adults with their own values and dreams? How many parents know how to do so?

The family role we develop in childhood is based on obligations and expectations, rather than authentic emotional exchanges. A family is not a democracy, and children’s roles are designed to benefit the parents. Kids are told not to be fresh, not to talk back, not to disagree, and not to question their elders and other authority figures. There is a price to pay for this compliance, just as there is a price to pay for rebelling.

The Price of Dependence – and the Risks of Independence

Dependency is our default state, but independence is our *natural* state. We want both at the same time. Children have an innate drive for independence. Think of the two-year-old who says, “Me do it!” He can’t explain why it is so important to him, but he knows he wants to do it *by himself*. At the same time, he is terrified of being isolated and alone. He will lock into his family role and do whatever is required to win acceptance and approval from the parents he loves and depends upon.

Years later, that same two-year-old will keep doing what he was told to do, rather than shedding the role he was given to play and doing what he senses is right for him. He does that because he is controlled by his past. The past is always present in our memories, even if we don’t want it to be. The patterns that shaped us at ages five and ten and sixteen years old are still being reinforced by our family when we are thirty, forty, and fifty years old. By that point our role feels so natural we may not even be aware of it.

Some of us are so indoctrinated by our families to behave in a certain way that we never learn how to act independently. It doesn’t matter if we live at home, or 3,000 miles away, or even if our parents are dead; we remain stuck in outdated, dependent patterns of behavior. We subconsciously keep trying to please our parents instead of understanding our own needs. I have counseled thousands of patients who sacrificed their independence in order to keep the family status quo forever, even though they were personally unhappy.

Even though it is a universal phenomenon, there is a steep price to be paid for roles. The role that is created for us by our parents is crafted to hide the fault lines in the relationship between the two of them. All marriages involve some degree of denial, and some are based on completely ignoring obvious issues. Peace is maintained by overlooking the flaws of each partner – flaws that create unresolved problems that threaten the marriage. Family roles simply cover them up, like painting over old wallpaper. When circumstances put us in the position of exposing the flaws and fault lines in the relationship between our parents, we are asked to reinforce the denial that protects their marriage. So we go along with what our parents want, even though we know that it is not the right thing to do, and that it is in *their* best interests, not ours. What our parents want for us, and what we want for ourselves, is not the same thing.

As we get older, the discrepancy between what we see is true and what we are told is true becomes more and more apparent. We face a difficult choice: either ignore what we see, stay quiet and do what our parents want, or speak out about our observations and risk the disappointment and isolation that may result. The more we stand up for ourselves, the more we are punished and shunned by parents and siblings alike.

We may find ourselves in the position of being the messenger for a message that nobody wants to hear. Siblings in the same household may turn a blind eye, which makes us the lone troublemaker. Other family members may be annoyed, and say things like, “These kinds of arguments only happen when *you* are around.” The pressure to maintain the status quo is so great that we may be

shamed into submission. When children are honest, parents may accuse them of being fresh, big-mouthed, disobedient, disrespectful, ungrateful, selfish, spoiled, and so on.

When we give in to family pressure, bad things happen internally. We quickly learn to bury our observations, and to fear our innate emotions. Unfortunately, when we bury our natural reactions to survive, we lose the connection with who we really are. We feel what I call The Split. We feel torn in two, feeling like there are two sides of us. We develop an *Authentic Self*, which is based on our genuine, honest observations and reactions, and a *Self for Others*, which acts to perpetuate family roles and myths.

This is where things get tough. It is human nature to feel authentic anger over being asked to maintain a family role that doesn't feel right. But it is also human nature to avoid what feels bad, and to seek out what feels good. Even the tiniest infant can make that distinction. It feels good to behave in a way that is rewarded with love and acceptance. So a huge problem appears when what makes us feel bad is our own mother or father. Something has to be stuffed away: either our authentic emotional reactions, such as anger, which disrupt our connection to our parents, or our understandable desire to go along with what our parents want, which blesses us with their continued acceptance and protection. One half of the split will cancel out the other.

Independence has a price, but it can change your life, and it can change the world. The birthplace of freedom is in your mind. You must first embrace your real self and free yourself from the ties that bind you. For many of my patients,

the ties that need to be broken are unhealthy ties to their families. They need to be replaced with healthier connections based on emotional honesty and shared experiences.

The New American Psychology

Traditionally psychiatrists, psychologists, and teachers have focused on a child's intelligence quotient (IQ). The concept was actually developed to identify children with a low IQ in case they needed extra help. Soon IQ was turned on its head and used to identify children with a high IQ, who were thought to have an advantage because of innate intelligence. But two things happened. First, intelligence turned out to be not an unchanging genetic gift, but a trait that can be developed. Second, it became clear that a high IQ does not necessarily correlate with life success or contentment. In the last thirty years or so, people have finally realized the importance of emotional intelligence (EQ). In reality, emotions are the power behind the throne. We are feeling beings who think, not thinking beings who feel.

What has surprised me the most in my practice is how little people know about their deepest emotions. Many of them know what they think. They often can't see the emotional root behind their thoughts. They operate with their thoughts at the wheel, and their emotions in the trunk. In fact, they too often use their thoughts to mask their feelings. Often they have thought a lot about their situation, and they offer me a conceptual reason they have worked out to explain their problems. The emotions behind their actions or thoughts are often absent. But emotions are our source of power and significance.

Early in my career, I realized that old-school European psychiatry has its place in history, but that today it inhibits us from developing the emotional awareness we need for independent thought and action. After listening to my patients for many years, I came to reject Freud's assertion that people are motivated only by sexuality and aggression. In that framework, emotions are treated as scary instinctual reactions that cause bad things to happen. I agree that we do hide our emotions from ourselves, but not for deep, dark, or mysterious reasons. We are not selfish at heart, nor do normal people have a secret death wish, or want to kill one parent in order to have sex with the other. We hide our emotions for a good reason – we are afraid that they will damage the relationships that we need to survive.

There is another important difference that sets this my new framework apart from the old psychology. Experts who espouse the traditional psychology point to character flaws and personality traits to explain why people do what they do. I find this approach blames the person for the problem. My years of needing to explain human behavior in all its varied forms has led me to believe that we can understand ourselves and others better if we understand the emotions behind the actions. We act to relieve the pressures from our emotions that build up over time.

I believe these emotional dynamics provide a more accurate explanation for people's behavior than character traits. If you look for an explanation based on the emotions behind the actions, people's choices make perfect sense. We are innately capable of making good choices. Sometimes what appears to be a bad

choice is better understood when it is viewed in a different light. Our internal logic may be well hidden, but that does not mean it is either nonexistent or destructive. We cannot fathom our deepest logic without understanding our deepest feelings.

I called my approach, The New American Psychology, because it is grounded in the same philosophy of man that our Founding Fathers adopted. The Founding Fathers created a political system based on the belief that people could govern themselves because they, individually and collectively, could decide what was in their best interests. They didn't need a higher authority to tell them what was good for them.

This New American Psychology is a psychology that complements this core belief. Like the Founding Fathers, it too rests on the idea that people are rational creatures whose choices make sense to them. People are not self-destructive. The emotions that drive them can be used for constructive purposes; to forge deep and meaningful relationships and to further the causes that support life. If they can find and listen to their authentic emotions, human beings can be trusted to make healthy decisions for themselves.

The more experience I got, the clearer my convictions became. As I continued to work at being a good therapist and a good husband, father, son, son-in-law, brother and friend, the New American Psychology took shape in my mind. The concepts are not hard to describe, but are difficult to put into practice. Some core principles that apply to everyone, are:

*The answers to life's dilemmas lie within each individual. We are born with the capacity to know what is good for us.

*Emotions are the engine. Our mind is the steering wheel. You need both to drive a car effectively, but the power is in the engine.

*The past is always present. What we feel at any given moment is the emotions of our past mixed with the reactions of the present.

*When faced with doubt or internal conflict, we instinctively can find the right path by listening to our authentic emotions.

*Loving relationships are built on emotional listening – the kind of listening that you cannot rush through in order to make a quick fix.

*A satisfying life is based on a balance of work, love, and play. Too much attention to any one aspect, to the exclusion of the others, is unhealthy.

*Achievements and material success are not the gold standards for being a healthy human being.

*All parents are “some good, some bad”. Unfortunately, it is impossible to be a perfect parent. It is the job nobody can get right. You can learn to get it less wrong by listening to your partner and your children, especially when they are telling you the same thing.

*A family should be a school where independence, the pursuit of self-knowledge, and the understanding of emotions are taught and practiced. All family members

take turns being the student and the teacher, and all learn to forge emotionally honest, independent relationships with each other and the world.

There is much more to the New American Psychology, which you will read in the following chapters. Simply stated, recognizing authentic feelings is vital to everyone. You need your authentic emotions to create healthy relationships. You are born with authentic emotions and quickly learn to hide them. Children are very rarely taught how to recognize and deal with the array of conflicting emotions they feel as they grow up. The opposite is often the case. Children are taught to squash their feelings, become afraid of reacting naturally, and learn to fear their own emotions. This is why people fall back on their family roles, even though doing so inhibits emotional honesty, and promotes dependence on authority.

Learned Emotions

Following our family role, doing what our parents want us to do, creates *learned emotions*. We learn to feel guilty or ashamed about certain activities or even thoughts. We learn to feel afraid if we go astray. These learned emotions govern our behavior and are laid on top of our innate emotions. Because of the way we were raised, our authentic emotions – such as anger – may be almost completely hidden, and our learned emotions may be much more obvious. The quietest whisper in your head may be an important inner warning trying to be heard, while the loudest voice may be an oft-repeated reprimand from your mother or father. Which one is most likely going to get your attention?

Until you are aware of them, you cannot use your authentic emotions to free yourself from your family role. I wrote LOOKING FOR YOUR SELF IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES to help you learn how to recognize and feel your authentic emotions, instead of denying them in order to play a part that has become outdated and self-defeating. This book will help you unleash the power of your emotions and help you develop independent connections with others. You will learn to face the fear of embracing the truth, and earn the freedom that comes from living a self-aware and psychologically responsible life.

Rage, Anxiety, and Depression

While dependency may seem like a safe place, the act of giving up our authentic reactions – the essence of who we are – creates trouble. We cannot react naturally because that is not acceptable, so we retreat into the learned behavior and emotions associated with our family role. We hope this will put an end to our distress. But it doesn't. Our authentic emotions and observations are honest and true, and they do not simply disappear. When we try to deny them and cover them up, this is when the split opens between our Authentic Self and our Self for Others.

The first result of this split is anger. In order to keep the peace in our family, we may have to quickly hide our angry feelings. But stuffing anger away does not make it vanish. If we do not pay attention to it, our anger will go underground and later manifest itself as destructive rage – against others, or against ourselves, and often in ways that are not obvious. Also, ignoring our authentic anger creates a vicious cycle. We try to hide our anger, but eventually it boils over into rage,

which simply confirms our worst fears about the danger of our authentic emotions, which in turn makes us want to hide our anger even more.

Although our parents told us otherwise, we have the right to embrace our authentic emotions, particularly our gut anger. I believe anger is our best friend. Whether it lasts for a long period of seething, or for one hot second, it is our ally. It exists because there is a problem. It is trying to tell us that something is wrong. LOOKING FOR YOUR SELF IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES will show you how to recognize your authentic anger and use it to fuel constructive behavior and change.

A second predictable result of denying our authentic feelings is anxiety. Although anxiety can manifest itself in strange ways, it is really very logical. Anxiety is a type of fear that lets us know that if we follow our anger, we are in danger of violating the rules we must follow to stay connected to our parents. We fear that we will be alone and cut off emotionally. When we are afraid of acknowledging our authentic feelings, we are actually afraid of *ourselves*. What could create more anxiety than that?

A third response to burying our genuine feelings is depression. When we cannot acknowledge our anger, or believe in our Authentic Self, we may become hopeless and helpless. Instead of directing our anger at our family, we make *ourselves* the target of our own anger, which creates depression. As we get older, we continue this pattern of burying our genuine feelings, and this becomes a habit in all situations. Instead of holding others accountable for our troubles—

our boss, co-workers, partner, or even circumstances beyond our control – we blame ourselves, and this makes us depressed.

Hiding our anger protects our family and others from our wrath and prevents us from risking alienation – but the problem that made us angry in the first place is not solved. Moreover, because we did not speak up, the fact that the problem is ongoing is now our fault. This is a no-win situation: we are raised to behave a certain way, but when we behave in the correct manner, it makes us depressed.

There is nothing to fear from simply acknowledging our inner anger. This will not turn us into impulsive hotheads. On the contrary, it is the split created by ignoring our initial anger that creates rage reactions and out-of-control behavior.

Growing Up

It takes courage to be your authentic self and to have a voice. To unlearn the emotions and messages that you've been taught for so long, you must face fear. You must not listen to your Self for Others when it says, "This is how you are *supposed* to do it." Instead of being who you've been taught to be, you must listen to your Authentic Self and honor who you really are. When you reclaim your independence in this way, you become an adult.

To have a content and fulfilling life, it is critical to establish emotional independence – that is, to rely on your own sense of what is good for you, and good for your community. In order to have satisfying adult relationships, you need to be able to distinguish between your authentic feelings, and your learned emotions. Your Self for Others makes this difficult. It has been in control for years, probably decades. Some of my patients have even completely fused with

it and see it as their real self. As a result, millions of people are walking around as semi-adults – not entirely independent, not entirely self-aware, and not entirely grown up.

Using this book, you will learn to put your emotions at the wheel, and your thoughts in the trunk. You will learn to be emotionally honest, and your relationships will improve. You will develop independent connections that are not based on subservience. You will no longer have to play a role or be an imposter. You will be able to negotiate and resolve differences through compromise. You won't need to deny yourself in order to maintain a relationship. You will be able to share your real self more openly. You will connect through the emotions that are revealed rather than hidden. Getting past your past will open up a future that is rooted in the rich soil of your authentic self, not a life struggling to survive in the shallow surface of your learned behavior.

Fixing Our Relationships with Family

Historically, our relationship with our family has never been right. Americans have never known how to live according to the principles that were handed to us during the birth of our nation. We have never had a clear idea about how to embrace independence in ourselves, create marriages based on independent connections, or raise children who know both what freedom means and its price.

I believe this is the new world that our Founding Fathers envisioned. We tried to make it happen once but failed. The essence of the social revolution of the sixties was an attempt to break free of traditional family roles, and to experience self and relationships in a different way. If you're a Baby Boomer, you remember

peace, love, happiness, and flower power. Unfortunately, the Baby Boomers could not comprehend at that time the depth of the social change they were trying to achieve. They went for a walk in the woods without an emotional compass to guide them. Hippies had no path to follow, and it turned out sex, booze, drugs, and “love the one you’re with” did not help them feel good about themselves, or sustain relationships, or raise healthy children, or change the country. When money and greed came back into vogue, the Baby Boomers were distracted from what really matters for the next fifty years. This book will reveal how we can take up and renew the best ideas of the sixties, and move from “father knows best” to an honest version of “people know best.”

Independence brings great rewards, but it must be deliberately nurtured. This book will help you learn to recognize the role you played in your family of origin, and how it restricts your ability to be self-fulfilled today. You’ll learn to be alert for that little flash of anger that lets you know when there is a conflict between what you *truly* want to do or say, and what you think you *ought* to do or say. My promise to you is that this book will enable you to grow yourself up so you can be a happier, more successful, and better person.

To get started, I’m going to tell you my own story. I was, by all conventional measurements, a successful kid. I was blessed with athleticism and intelligence, and my parents expected me to be the Golden Child. I worked my butt off to get into Princeton University. Everything was going along great, I thought... until I woke up one day completely unable to function. That was my introduction to the importance of hidden feelings, so that’s where I’ll begin now.

