

Neglect – The Obtuse Abuse

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Recently, I have noticed how difficult it is for victims of neglect to make a connection to the abuse of neglect. Neglect is about being ignored, being dismissed, and being discounted. It is the shame of "non-existence". Children who are raised in neglect are often very independent. They have learned to try to parent themselves in the absence of a parent figure. Because of the lack of parental involvement, these children often have difficulties making connections within themselves and often with others. Thus, it is difficult for a child or adult to identify the abuse of neglect-because they have come to ignore themselves, discount themselves and dismiss themselves. Indeed, they do not even recognize this has happened to them in their family.

One of the primary roles of the parent is to serve as a mirror and reflect to the child what they see the child is feeling. When the parent validates the child's feelings, then the parent offers support, nurturance or help according to the child's needs. In the case of neglect, the parent is often preoccupied with another thing, task, or self. Thus, the mirroring piece does not get accomplished and the child is left to make sense of their myriad of feelings. The child cannot know how to identify these feelings by name, and is ill equipped to understand how they feel about what is going on around them. Children of neglect are sometimes confused, lonely and considered "loners".

Connections and relationships are birthed of God. He is the very source of all relationships and connections, which He began when He created Adam and Eve. It is because of His blessed and tender connection to us that we can be attended to by a Father who will affirm us, nurture us and speak life into us on every matter. God is the opposite of neglect. God will never leave us or forsake us. He will be there to help us make connections-even with ourselves-if we allow Him to do this. " Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not rely on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight."(Proverbs 3:3-5) If you have suffered neglect in any form, ask God to help you be attentive to how you are feeling. Speak with Him about these feelings and know that God truly cares about them and you.

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