

CCFA Support Group “Savvy IBD Living Thought List”- January 2009

The Wisdom in IBD

“It is only by going through [the pain], that we may heal”

Joseph Campbell “The Hero’s Journey”

I. Finding our self through illness: Healing is associated with an authentic grieving process, which means mourning our losses, including confronting our fears and going through our pain/trauma [processing whatever ails us]. There is an abundance of light awaiting us, once we work through the trauma. When we traverse through the landscape of the soul “the journey”, whereby integrating the light and the dark [the “positive and negative/good and bad”] aspects, we eventually find our true self.

- The symptom provides us clues as to who we *really* are, even representing our entire being. We can begin by asking ourselves e.g., what do we experience as “gut-wrenching”, what do we find exhausting, what seems intolerable for us to confront? If we can truly look at this critical aspect of ourselves and authentically deal with it, key insights are sure to manifest, which will guide us to new paradigms of living our life to the fullest possible, while realizing our potential, our life’s work.

II. Qualities for enduring the darkness: The more we are able to confront the darkness [fear, pain, trauma associated with some form of loss- negative energy]; the more light [peace, joy, love, freedom- positive energy] is likely to prevail. To begin the journey into the darkness, we need to tap into significant reservoirs of:

- Courage and bravery are necessary for us to be willing to enter the depths of psyche/soul.
- Will/determination- to withstand and bear the pain, terror, trauma.
- Strength for staying centered on our path, despite the inevitable feelings of discouragement and defeat or “derailment” that accompany the process of self-awareness, of healing our wounds.
- Perseverance- to the end.

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III. Techniques for keeping us focused on our path towards wholeness/healing:

- Keeping a healthy perspective- being grateful for what we have right now, as things could typically be worse. This does not diminish the significance of whatever difficulty we are struggling with, but rather remembering that most often, it is a transient phase of our development and we will become stronger from surviving what is challenging to us.
- Not getting caught up in self-blame, shame, regret, victim cycle, as these undermine us. Instead, we can remind ourselves of our strength to confront, and go through whatever is troubling us, for we are a survivor, and can make it! It's useful to reflect upon a time when we made it through a period of hardship, and can again.
- Resisting the temptation to escape, such as when we choose to not deal with things. But the larger issues usually do not disappear but re-appear in other forms i.e., increased IBD symptoms, feeling overwhelmed, displaced aggression, and so forth.
- Helpful to delve into the parts of a difficult situation so they are more manageable for us to digest and transform, while eventually able to see the whole, with its unique deeper meaning to our process i.e., taking responsibility for our selves, so we can rely more on our abilities and effectiveness in the future.
- Realizing we can impact our environment i.e., with making wise choices that enhance our life, whereby creating a more positive environment for us, such as choosing to be with those who uplift, as opposed to inviting negative energy--which can impinge on our equilibrium, on our process.
- Our greatest power is found within. We are most effective when we are attuned to our internal gifts. Our true worth is not dependent on external factors. However, this does not diminish how very important it is for us to utilize external resources i.e., a personalized support system.

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IV. Benefits associated with doing this essential “self-work”: If we have the courage to withstand the difficulties associated with this arduous process of confronting our pain, we will surely be more whole, likely feeling:

- An increased sense of strength, vitality, energy.
- Contentment, as there will be more freedom from being liberated from previous fears.
- Our mind will have more clarity.
- Somatization will decrease, as in that which is seemingly too intense for our minds to process, thus it manifests in the body.
- Increased self-esteem, self-respect, self-confidence.
- Have more to give to others, and a desire to do so.

V. Suggestions for group discussion:

- How are we doing with maintaining equilibrium? What is the “barometer-reading” with the positive and negative energy within us?
- How are we doing on our personal journey towards wholeness?
- How are our struggles impacting our illness?
- What do we feel like sharing/processing right now? What is arising in us, wanting to be expressed in a supportive group dynamic?
- What seems too daunting for us confront?
- Where are we withholding i.e., a pain in the body, a deep feeling in the gut, an overall malaise?
- In what ways have we are we feeling a healing of our wounds?
- How are we fostering more strength to endure the challenges we inevitably experience?