

Tip #83 Nothing Inside You Wants to Hurt You
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Inner Relationship Focusing

There are no enemies inside us. All our parts are on our side. Even the ones that seem not to be, that seem vicious or self-destructive, are behaving that way in service of somehow protecting us, in their view. We can help our difficult parts get in touch with their protective intentions by spending time with them with open, non-judgmental, interested curiosity.

If we remain stuck in repetitive patterns of self-criticism, painful emotion, and less-than-ideal behavior, it must be because we are identified with one side or another of an inner conflict. We need Presence, the ability to "be with" all sides without bias.

How We Change

Change is natural. When we bring awareness to what we feel, it naturally changes... and it changes in its own life-direction.

When we try to make ourselves change, we are taking sides, we are identified with a part of ourselves, and the very act of trying brings more stuckness.

But when we bring a simple, fearless awareness to what we feel, then the natural change that is in everything alive becomes available again.

Eugene Gendlin, Ph.d., and creator of Focusing, writes: "We think we make ourselves good by not allowing the feeling of our negative ways."

That sentence echoes in my mind often as I work with people who seem caught up in an inner struggle to not feel something that another part of them doesn't like or doesn't want to feel. This struggle is tragically doomed to fail; we cannot NOT have some real feeling--although we can ignore it, suppress it, or exile it.

But something we feel which is being ignored, suppressed, or exiled really cannot change in the way it needs to change. It can't "carry forward" in Gendlin's terms.

The quote goes on this way: "We think we make ourselves good by not allowing the feeling of our negative ways. But that just keeps them static, the same from year to year. What is not felt, remains the same. When it is felt [from Presence], it changes...."

We can find Presence by saying "hello" to whatever we feel, and then saying "hello" to any feelings about our feelings. We can find Presence by sensing the support beneath us and the spaciousness around us. And we can find Presence by remember how we would treat a shy animal: with patience and stillness and empathy.