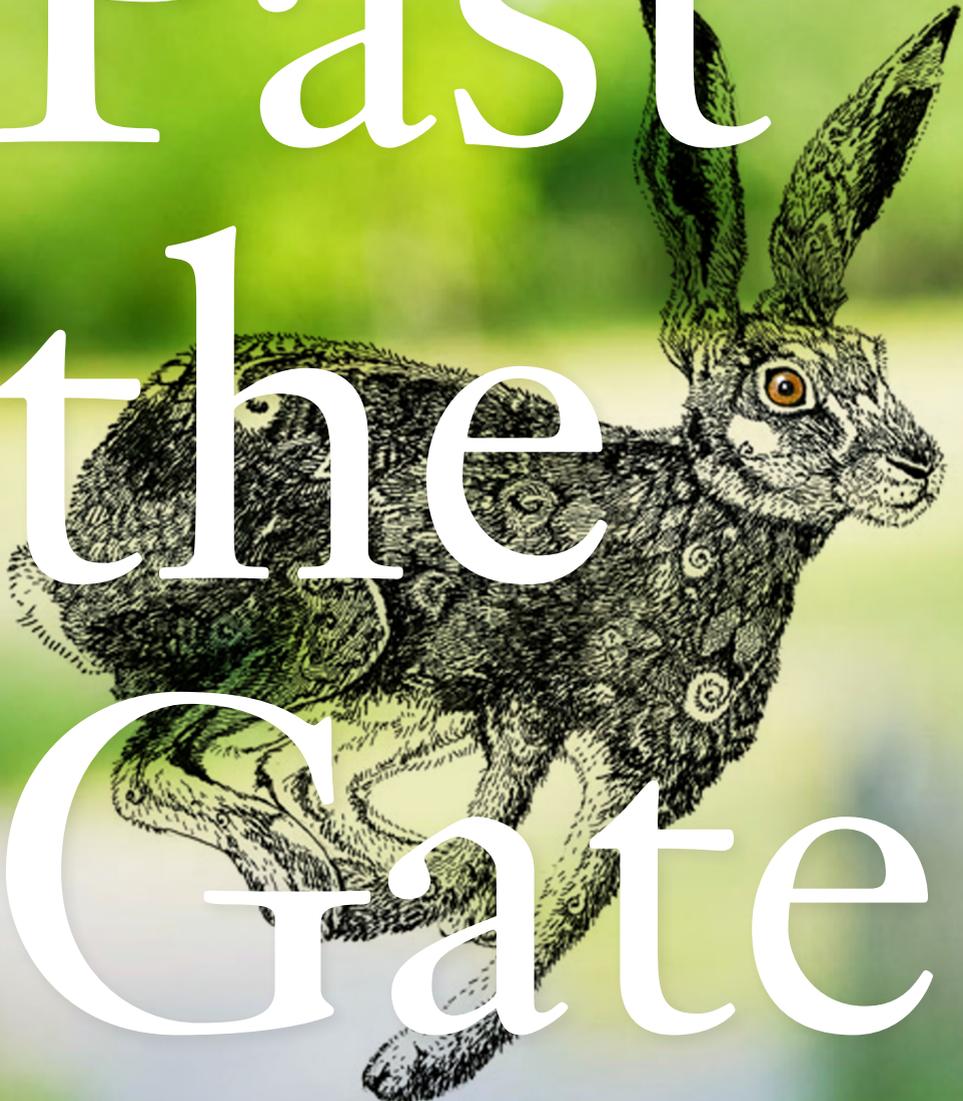


Esther Teule

Past the Gate



A little book about finding freedom



Past the Gate

A little book about finding freedom

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For my daughter Floor

“Pain and suffering are a kind of currency passed from hand to hand, until they reach someone who receives them, but does not pass them on.”

Simone Weil

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What this book is about...

I believe that the biggest leap we can make in ourselves is to finally love who we are. This may sound like a nice but useless sentence, pink and fluffy, when what you need is a deep and radical change. Something serious.

In fact, loving yourself at all times is the most revolutionary change you will ever experience. Beyond what you can imagine.

I am not talking about highlighting the features in yourself that seem to do okay in the world. Or pumping up your self-esteem.

What I refer to is *deeply loving* yourself.

Can you honestly say you love yourself
right now?

As in: completely and fully?

That is probably hard.

Because deep down you may believe that you
are not lovable.

You see...when you feel yourself, you feel the
beliefs you have about yourself.

You may not have been able to enjoy being you
much, because these beliefs come first, plung-
ing you into uncertainty and confusion.

Like the belief that you are not good enough.

That you are not smart or beautiful enough.

That you have no right to be here.

That you are unworthy and invisible.

This is the tragedy we all carry with us in
our core.

It leads to a lot of suffering.

A well-kept secret, however, is that the belief is a mistake.

A mistake that you can see through and let go of, leading you past the gate of your self-hatred.

It means you then free-fall into yourself and cannot but love what you encounter.

I How it all happened

How come you do not truly love yourself?
When did you begin to believe that you were
not good enough? How did that happen?

You may believe you have many good reasons
not to love yourself:

Look at me being so stupid! Look at me acting
so clumsy...

I am simply not talented enough, everybody
can see that.

Look at that belly in the mirror, how
disgusting!

Recognize this? These comments that make
you feel like a failure? That make you feel
small and powerless and bring you down?

It is just your belief talking, looking for evidence to justify itself. Like a pair of unloving eyes, looking for faults and mishaps. Whose eyes are these anyway?

Difficult to tell.

Because the one that is listening (you) is not aware of the messenger, but is paralyzed, like a rabbit caught in the headlights of a car. You never really question the source of the painful commenting. You just suffer, lost in the game of blaming yourself.

But: right now you are reading this book because you no longer want to suffer!

You no longer want to suffer and you feel ready – at least sort of ;-) – to break the spell and find out what it is that is keeping you trapped.

So let's investigate this source and how it ended up being so powerful in your life.

For that, we need to go back in time.

Love and Poison

Imagine this.

One day you were born and grew up with your parents or single mother, or single father or other caretakers...

I will call them, her or him, the Parents from now on.

You bonded with them in the most intimate way, from infant to teenager.

They were your safety, your love source, your role-models, your food suppliers and givers of everything else you needed to survive (even when they didn't do all of these things).

They were your world.

Your parents probably loved you an awful lot. Most parents do.

What is also true is that most of the Parents, like the rest of us, are wounded at the core. They may have these beliefs about themselves that hurt.

Beliefs they may not even be aware of, forged at an early age, hidden deep inside.

They may secretly believe they are a failure and the world looks down on them.

They may believe they can never have what they want because they do not deserve it.

They may believe they need to work hard to earn respect, feeling unworthy within.

Bonding with parents is not a selective process.

There is no buffer between you and them, no rescue.

You get their love *and* hurt in one package.

Receiving their love is like a fertilizer, making you grow and flourish. Receiving their raw hurt though, is like taking in poison.

Whoa, that sounds serious.

Well, it is.

You see, the thing with hurt – real, serious hurt coming from a deep place – is, that it needs to be processed in order not to become toxic.

When hurt is suppressed instead of owned (as in: being felt, understood and grieved over) it will indeed become like a poison, a homeless ghost looking for validation, hurting others in its quest for acknowledgement.

The Parents may not be aware of this happening, feeling they have buried their pain safely inside, believing they are not burdening you with it. They may even be unaware of their woundedness in the first place.

Suppressed hurt will always be projected outwards, claiming care, special treatment, attention, respect and even love.

Once pain is owned and processed, it may still be present, *but will no longer be passed on*. Like it has found its rightful home, where it can come to rest. It may even become a gift, softening the fabric of the heart.

However
if this didn't happen,
their hurt *will* be passed on to you.

Okay. Let's take a deep breath and investigate this toxic intake for a moment...

Poison, alias unprocessed hurt, comes in many flavors.

It can be doled out to you overtly or in more hidden ways – like the Parents being cold or manipulative instead of doing things like yelling and hitting. (The hidden ways seem less bad somehow, more civilized. I don't believe they are.)

Some common flavors:

Rage.

Coldness.

Neglect.

Abuse.

Manipulation.

These are the messages that are attached to them:

Rage: I hate you.

Coldness: I can't stand you.

Neglect: I don't care about you.

Abuse: I need you to suffer like I did.

Manipulation: I can only love you if you do it my way.

Terrifying stuff to take in as a little human!

Especially when you are too small to put things in perspective: Now is all there is, which is Huge.

You cannot protect yourself, or run away.
You feel like you need to cope or die.
This may all sound a bit melodramatic to you.
(It sure wasn't that horrible!)

You may feel you want to rush in and make the
Parents look less bad. Like they didn't really
mean it. Or couldn't help acting that way back
then. Or right now.

Notice that?

Ever wondered why you always excuse the
Parents? Why we *all* do this?

You may confuse it with love. But in truth it is
an important part of having become a rabbit in
the headlights.

Powerless and frozen.

Let's find out why.

The Two-step Trick

When you experience something life-threatening, or something too painful to bear, your mind does this thing.

This trick to make you survive the situation. Actually, it is a Two-step Trick and it is quite brilliant. This is how it works:

The first step is the Trick of Suppression. It sort of erases your memory of the too-terrifying-experience.

It is not like the memory is forever gone, but it is pushed out of your consciousness so that you can survive the situation. (This happens for example to warvictims, or to survivors of serious accidents – you are probably familiar with stories like these.)

In the case of little-you being in the Poison Situation, this trick suppresses the terrifying truth that *the source of love actually turned against you*.

Which is a shocking insight when your life depends on it and there is nowhere else to go. It is, in fact, too unbearable to be true.

So in comes the mind and suppresses this insight.

It buries it deep inside, in a small freezer. Preferably with a big lock on it.

But it cannot make everything go away. The taste of fear is still there, making it hard to breath at times.

So now the second step kicks in: the Trick of Inversion.

This part of the trick reverses the truth. Since you need the Parents to be trustworthy, you start to blame yourself.

The logic goes like this:

When the source of love (the Parents) turns against you, it means it must be very hard to love you.

You are simply not lovable enough, so it is your fault.

It means you need to change so they can love you again.

With this inverted logic you now have a way out, a hope for things to be right again: all you have to do is become a better person!

Like: being nice to mommy and daddy, being a cute girl or boy, not taking up space, being easy and sunny, stopping being needy. Being the strong one. Not saying what you really feel. Not being you. Being what they want you to be, giving them what they seem to need. Saving them, pleasing them.

Quite a task for a little child!

Note:

This is not a trick you come up with yourself. It happens automatically, without you having a choice in the matter.

So do not waste your time believing you did this to yourself. Or not liking yourself for having become invisible. Or a good liar.

Or a pleaser.

There was no other way.

Truly.

The problem with the Two-step Trick is that the mind makes sure the job is well done. It makes sure you won't look back and find out it was just a story you believed to keep you going.

You come to believe that something is wrong with you and in order to be loved, you need to make an *effort* now.

The belief is telling you:

- When you are your true self, the Parents will be hurt.
- They are hurt because of you.
- If only you were a better person, they would surely love you.
- The Parents are your source of love, you need them to survive. You *need* them to love you!

In the meantime the painful wound inflicted by their poison is sleeping in the secret freezer, covered now with shiny crystals. Your wound doesn't count, isn't there, is out of sight, numb with cold.

(This may sound convenient in a way – what you can't feel, can't hurt you. But I can assure you it is not, in the end.

Because denying your hurt is like denying who you are, turning you into a stranger to yourself.)

Can you see how you lost your natural, loving connection with yourself?

How you came to distrust your own goodness?

How you became the rabbit in the headlights, listening to your inner critic instead?

What Big and Complex Issues for a little human to struggle with!

I think I need a cup of tea now, nice and hot and reassuring. You?



Okay. To sum it up so far:

Without knowing it, you had to leave yourself to save yourself.

You tried to save yourself by becoming a Better You.

You did not blame the Parents because of the Suppression-and-Inversion Trick.

What you had to leave behind:

- your self-love (or a big chunk of it)
- your true expression
- trust in yourself
- the truth about being deeply hurt
(the wound in the freezer)

And the Trick is still playing out, right now.
Because it was never told to stop.

A little word about the Parents

While reading, you may have felt that the
Parents deserve a little more respect.
And love and understanding.
And forgiveness.
(Especially if you are a parent yourself,
like me ;-))

But:

Remember that the Parents are just like you.
They are a daughter or a son as well.
And this book is about just that.
Can't change the Parents, can you?
But you *can* change yourself.
So allow yourself
to focus inwards
and let this be about You for now!

The story continues...

Life went on. You grew up, paddling on life's river with its strong currents, waterfalls and wide open patches, your body shaped into a man's or woman's.

You are big now, and you have learned a lot of things.

You've been courageous and very adult, managing your life. You've been doing well so far!

But deep inside, the trick is still active and the wound still frozen. The lie about who you are was never truly unraveled and seen for what it was.

You see, the Parents have simply become the world. Or vice versa. The world has become the Parents.

The source of love and poison.

The world is:
your lover
your friends
your family
your neighbors
people at work
Facebook
Twitter
people on the street
people anywhere on this planet and beyond
people in your head

They are the new mom and dad, while you are still trying to become the Better You. Still not at home in yourself.

In a way nothing has changed.

Not really.

Of course,
you may have found happiness and purpose in your life, doing things you like, living your adult life in a way that suits you.

Much respect for that.

But there always seems to be a familiar point that you can't get past.

Like there's a gate, holding you back.

A gate that reminds you of something unfinished, something fearful. Something painful that isn't right.

This gate signals what you were programmed to avoid. So whenever you accidentally (or on purpose) wander in that part of your garden, and suddenly the gate appears in front of you, you hurry back.

Back to safety.

Not knowing that the gate is your portal to freedom.

So let's be courageous and have a peek.

Let's check out what the gate is about.

Shall we?

First: Just so you know

Have you any idea how lovely you are?
How amazingly inventive and smart?
How beautiful and deeply lovable?

(you may want to read these lines again :-))

I am not talking about perfection.
Perfect to whom?
You are a perfect human being,
too grand to fit in any description.

You are already the best you can be.
And do not believe that automatic thought
that you are not.

2 The Gate

So let's take a closer look at the gate.
What is it exactly?

It holds in your deep beliefs about you being unlovable. It also hides the freezer.
(This is beginning to sound like a prop in a horror movie, containing a severed head or something ;-). In fact it is far from it, but we will get to that...)

First I want to say something about some clever mind tricks that guard the gate. They are important tools of the Inversion Trick, and quite depressing. They are extremely powerful as well, if you believe in their magic.
That is why I mention them.

They are so deeply embedded in our culture, that these guards even have names. Not long ago, they were seen as virtues, as something important to keep you from wandering off. In fact they are still widely accepted as such. They are called Guilt and Shame. You probably know them.

Guilt and Shame

Guilt makes you feel bad when you focus on yourself. Instead, it tells you, you should focus on the needs of the Parents.

Shame tells you that you are deeply disappointing – failing the Parents who deserve a better version of you.

Remember the Parents are the world as well, so they can be anything or anybody.

Their message is extremely painful and keeps you on hold. They keep you trapped in a loyalty dilemma:

Guilt says:

If you love yourself you betray the Parents.

If you look into your own needs, you neglect the Parents.

You are responsible for their happiness.

(With love and needs I actually mean *fierce* love and *real* needs. The kind that make you follow your passions and dreams, even when that means packing your things and moving to the North Pole, never to return. I am not referring to the thin layer of self-approval that takes up no space and is in fact reassuring to the Parents.)

Shame says:

If you stand up for yourself, you reject the Parents.

If you refuse to feel like a failure, you will cast them aside and be all alone and lose their love. The only option is to believe your unworthiness in order to feel safe.

These forces are actually telling you:

If you validate yourself, you reject the Parents.

If you validate the Parents, you reject yourself.

What a horrible dilemma! A lose-lose situation!

It is the Inversion Trick at its best. The logic of Guilt and Shame is quite hard to break once you are under their spell. Their game is very clever; when they become too harsh, they find a nicer tone of voice to convince you. Guilt will convince you that you are just being a caring person – isn't that what you should be? Shame will convince you that it is simply telling you the truth – what else can you be but a failure?

They sure are a nasty couple.

See how they keep you from loving yourself?
How they keep you from finding the truth
about who you are? How cleverly they keep you
dazed in the headlights?

I know. It is getting a bit depressing now.

Hang on.

We'll get to the good part in a while, I promise.
First, we need to discuss yet another source
of confusion that keeps you from entering
through the gate.

So take a deep breath and pour yourself
another cup of tea. (I am having one as well.)

The Common Beliefs

Another obstacle in going through the gate is the Common Beliefs about what is right or wrong.

The Common Beliefs are like a shared conscience, telling us things like: it's bad to steal or kill, it's good to be kind and have Christmas together with your family (just to name a few).

Deeply embedded in the Common Beliefs lives the idea that in the end, you should always take care of the Parents.

No matter how they made you feel or how they treated you, no matter how hurt you still are, there seems to be this responsibility, this guilty obligation to be the good daughter or son.

(Don't get me wrong, when there is a healthy, loving relationship, taking care of each other is never an effort. But then again, this book is not really about that, so let's move on.)

Actually, this guilty obligation, supported by the Common Beliefs, is part of the Two-step Trick: if you reject the Parents, there is no hope left to be finally loved.

You will be bad and lost forever.
And it would be your own fault!

So you hide your true feelings, hide your hurt, your anger, your smartness and honesty and pick up the phone for that weekly call. The Two-step Trick is not just a personal survival mechanism; we are all in it. We are all affected by this shared conscience, playing on our guilt and our fear of losing love. It's everywhere: in the media, in the advertisements, in common remarks people make.

Moving past the Common Beliefs is scary, because they tell you how we should relate to each other. They are like the rules of the (family) clan you belong to. Imagine you are out there on your own, without the rules to guide you...

That's frightening!

How will you know now what is good or bad?

How will you know if you are brave and true or in fact a miserable, selfish person?

How can you tell?

Disobeying the clan's rules is a move not to be taken lightly. It touches on your deep, initial fear of being abandoned and unloved.

The fear of being wrong and bad after all.

This is part of the reason I wrote this book.

To remind you of your own truth and that you are not alone. To remind you that you are in the end contributing more to the clan by fixing your hurt and claiming your freedom... even if it means leaving it to heal yourself.

We have discussed the guards that try to keep you from the content of the freezer; we have looked at Guilt, Shame and the power of Common Beliefs.

Time to find out what they are protecting so well!

A hidden treasure

Remember I mentioned the pain of encountering the unlove (the poison) of your parents while being a little girl or boy?

The pain of feeling rejected, of feeling threatened, abandoned and hurt by the ones who were supposed to be your safe haven?

This is what is in the freezer: this core wound.

It hurt deeply.
And it still does.

All this time you tried hard to avoid this hurt by becoming a Better You. Because you were afraid to find the bad you, the one who wasn't loved, the one who wasn't worth it.

And deeper still,
the realization that there was no love.
No love, no safety, no warmth, no embrace.

I feel like being silent for a moment...

So you can just breathe and feel this for
yourself.

For if you do not rush over it, you may find you
are able to stay with this unlove. To look at it
and simply stay.
Keep breathing.

And perhaps, then, you can also see this:
There may be pain. But it was never your fault.
There may have been no love in this particular
place.
But it wasn't your fault.
It may feel like there was a terrifying gap be-
tween you and the Parents. You didn't cause it.
It wasn't because of you.

It was the Parents' woundedness that found its way to you. It is what happens. But it was not caused by you. Their pain was never your fault. Ever.

Have you ever looked in the eyes of a three year-old and found anything else but innocence? These are your eyes.

How could you ever have been the cause of pain? The pain felt by the Parents was already theirs, just spilling out on you. You could never have saved them, for *they can only save themselves*.

You tried something that was impossible.

You are guiltless, unmarred and perfectly sound.

Sit with this for a while. Let it sink in.
Take a walk or sit in a comfy chair.
Realize you are lovable through and through
and all good.
Safe in your core. Home.

3 Going Through

You may have felt some (or huge!) relief after we investigated what is hidden in the freezer in the previous chapter. (Or perhaps you are not convinced yet...which is fine as well.)

Seeing that you are in fact Whole and Lovable can bring a feeling of deep relaxation and lightness.

You are okay!

And you don't have to do anything to be okay!

There is nothing wrong with you!

You are complete and faultless!

(Which by the way doesn't mean you are exclusively beautiful, good, shiny and bright. You are also grumpy, irritating and annoying, and you step on people's toes every once in a while.

But that's just the weather. Just that delicious variety that is the spice of life.

Without the underlying belief that you should be different (meaning more lovable), this is no problem. So enjoy being human ;-))

Whether you felt a moment of relief or not, going through the gate is obviously not just about enjoying one clear moment. It is in fact a radical, lasting change in how you view yourself.

So...

To bring some clarity and direction into this radical process, here are Three Important Steps that I found to be crucial in getting past the gate.

To be honest, they are not really steps, as you will find out; the whole thing is merely a mysterious unfolding, moving in spirals, unpredictable yet perfectly sensible, following its own, organic course.

But this is a book.

And the mind loves things to be clear and orderly ;-).

Like Three Steps Leading Somewhere.

So let's stick to steps in this book, just for the sake of clarity.

I will explain all about them in this coming chapter.

First

you may want to walk your dog, cuddle your cat or stretch your back for a moment before we plunge into the first Step together.

I am glad you are still with me so far... hug!

Step One: Acknowledging your childhood hurt

That sounds like a big one. And yes, it is. :-)

It is the part of the process in which you connect with the emotions that found their way to the freezer. Like feeling abandoned, unloved, lost, rejected or shamed.

To release these old pains, you need to *first feel and validate* them. As in: really, deeply allowing your hidden childhood feelings to surface.

This is crucial, because in skipping this step, you will be skipping over the validation of yourself.

You will still deny the wound deep inside.

So only when you are willing to truly feel the frozen emotions, without holding back, will the ice begin to melt.

And only then you can dismantle the Trick.

You see,

only when you deeply acknowledge your feelings do you acknowledge yourself.

(This is actually quite a deep sentence, if I may say so. Think it through for a moment!)

The amazing thing about emotions and feelings is that, once felt and expressed, they move on. They simply transform and dissolve.

But you need to get to the heart of the emotion first – opening to it not only in your mind, but physically as well. Emotions need to be expressed, tasted, cried over and digested before they can transform in peaceful spaciousness, leaving you relieved and open.

(Well, you know how it feels after a good, noisy, snotty cry and speaking up about what has been bothering you: it feels like a weight has been lifted from you and your heart can breathe again.)

Sounds positive so far.

BUT IT FEELS SO SCARY!

TERRIFYING!

WHY GO THERE!

*(Well, hello Fear! I was expecting you, actually.
Have a seat. You can have 7 sentences to
ventilate.)*

(...Thanks. Only 7?!)

(Yes. Go ahead.)

(Okay...)

What if it will completely overwhelm me?!

What if it hurts too much?!

What if it turns out it was all my fault
after all?!

Admitting my pain will betray the Parents!
And destroy my Happy Childhood Story!
And my Family Fairy Tale!
It can't be done, I will be destroyed!

(Okay, thank you.)

These are the fears that may come up in talking about connecting with your childhood pain. The fears you felt as a child.

The good news is that you are not a child *any more*.

You are grown-up and capable.

You will be so, so capable of handling these emotions. And so very, very relieved once you welcome them! Especially the deep feelings of being wronged, humiliated, rejected – the stuff you have perhaps pushed aside as childish and unworthy of your attention.

Besides, you don't have to go down there alone.

I would even strongly advice you not to.
You do need some support!

I will explain why.

Guidance and support

Processing emotions is best done under guidance in a safe surrounding, like in a group setting, or just you with a therapist or coach. It is very, very helpful.

Why not just do it by yourself?

Because the Trick is simply too clever, it will outsmart you at some point.

Because your fear may be too unsettling.

Because you need reassurance and warmth in the places where it gets too cold for you to move on.

Remember that all this stuff is of a very young age. It needs to be able to express itself fully and feel welcome in doing so.

Being in a group may sound like not your cup of tea.

But believe it or not, it is the best place to be when dealing with these feelings.

You will find support, recognition (you are not the only one feeling this way) and loads of love and respect coming your way. This is crucial in seeing through the Trick that likes to convince you that you are unlovable and less than others.

So grant yourself the gift of being guided and supported.

Especially in the beginning when all is new and scary.

It will allow you to look into yourself and find your true home. Without having to worry about much else.

Sparkly angels

It is not only *painful* feelings that melt in this process.

Once you say Yes to your suppressed feelings, you will notice some sparkly, radiant angels finding their way back to you.

Like:

your lightness

your trust

your playfulness

your boldness

your joy

All these lovely gifts that went into hiding in the act of Suppression-and-Inversion, can re-emerge, and take their rightful place in the front seat again.

Right next to you.

When this happens you may become aware of a familiar and yet unfamiliar sound filling the air.

It's not the car radio.

It is your heart singing!

These angels are a wonderful bonus, reminding you of your lovely nature, quickening the process even more.

One more thing

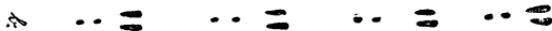
Validating and processing your childhood hurt will not happen overnight. It has many layers, many depths, offering you new discoveries and shiny gems over time, huge ones and small ones. It is an ongoing process that may even take a lifetime!

Your inner wound will heal, but will always be part of your tissue. (Like the scar of a physical wound.)

Always inviting you to find truth and dig deeper. To not settle for less, but find the deep Love that you are at the core of your being.

I do not want to sound like the hair advertisement, but you do deserve it.

It is who you are.



Here's something I told myself sometimes
while going through the process:
"If there is anyone who can do this, it is you."

Not that I had any qualifications to underline
that.

I guess it was the boldness of the sentence that
triggered something in me.

A deep longing to meet my power at last.
And to look the other way no longer.

Step Two: Learning to become an Inner Parent

So now we have come to the second step.

First I want to salute you for your braveness for reading all this stuff. We discuss it in a light way, but in fact it touches on deep and painful things.

Phew!

So make sure you get that gulp of fresh air every now and then – or ask for an encouraging kiss, hug or stroke on the back (just from whoever is available).

Or... simply have a little break in which you look around and realize you are still on planet Earth.

I just walked my dog in the rain (with the wrong shoes on my feet) and I must say it puts things in perspective. ;-)

So.

Whenever you are ready, let's look into the next step of Going Through the Gate. This step is about dismantling the Trick by learning to love yourself again. In fact it is about reversing the Inversion Trick. Which means:

Instead of hating yourself you love yourself.

Instead of distrusting yourself you trust yourself.

Instead of leaving yourself you stick by yourself.

How does this work?! How will you be able to do that?

I mentioned it in the header already; by actively becoming your own Inner Parent.

You see, there is still this little child inside that is scared and feels unloved. A person that never really aged (because of the frost). It still waits for the love of the Parents.

It needs someone who:
Really listens
Takes its needs seriously
Validates its feelings
Stands up for it
Loves it immensely

The Parents were not able to give you this back then, and there is no way you can change the past.

Although you know this, you still somehow attempt to earn their love, don't you? Even when they have passed away, you still try to prove your worthiness, be it now to the world.

This is because the little child in you still believes *it can only heal through their final recognition of who you are.*

The truth is, that will never happen.
That sounds cold, but realizing this can also wake you up from your childhood dream.

And invite you to go beyond, where you will find an even deeper love, a love that encompasses all.

The little you will not be healed by the Parents, nor by any other person. Even if all the love and recognition you crave for is given to you right now, you wouldn't be able to receive it. In fact no one out there is fit for the job because... you came to believe you are not lovable.

This belief is like a hole that cannot be filled from the outside.

No-one else gets past that Belief.

No lover, no friend or child could ever fix you. (We always hope for them to, but it never works.)

This leaves only one suitable candidate:

You.

The Big and Adult You.

The one that paddled the river and is reading these words.

Why are *you* the perfect candidate?

Because *only you* can see through the Trick and dismantle it.

Because *only you* can change your own beliefs.

Because *you* are the one who needs to discover the loveliness that you are.

(Most of us know that already.)

Because *you* know exactly what your inner child needs.

Some more reasons:

Taking care of yourself adds tremendously to your well-being. Listening to what you really want is amazingly inspiring. Being kind to yourself instead of beating yourself up changes your life.

And:

You are always available, never not there.

You do not need someone else to fulfil your needs. Which is big, because it will set others free as well.

But... isn't this just another Trick?

Yes! It is!

It is definitely another trick.

A temporary construction to help you love yourself again, and heal your inner wound. You name one part of you the Inner Parent, and another part the Inner Child. And set them up to love each other.

I was a bit worried about it myself, this set-up thing. (And I admit the Inner Child does sound very New-Agey ;-))

But it works.

I found it works amazingly well.

And I've seen it work wonders in others too.

So why not use it?

In time, when the wound begins to heal, when the Parent and Child in you have bonded, they become one.

Like a fluid, organic presence in your heart and belly.

When that happens, the construction is no longer needed.

What is left is you in one piece.

(And even this one piece may become transparent over time. But let's not get ahead of things).

The Inner Parent and the Inner Child

So what exactly is an Inner Parent and what is an Inner Child?

In many ways you are already an inner parent. Like when you want to eat that whole jar of cookies, but you take only one. (Okay. Three). You may want to swear really loudly and hit someone who is in your way when you are in a serious hurry. Instead you say something polite and wait 'til you can get past.

We could say that the Inner Parent is the one who knows how it works in the world.

Or knows enough, anyway.

The one who can make things happen in a mature way.

The one who has all this experience and is able to look ahead and plan things.

Your Inner Child is the Sensitive, Feeling side of you.

Part of it is wounded, frozen and in need of care, warmth and encouragement in order to participate in your life again. Once defrosted and at ease, being its natural self, it offers the gifts I mentioned earlier:

Joy

(the kind of joy that comes up for no reason)

Uncomplicated forwardness

Contentment

Trust

Creativity

Innocence

(It's a longer list but I always skip long lists in books myself.)

The healed Inner Child is all that.

It's the intuitive, feeling quality in yourself.

It is your heart's song, your spark, ageless and authentic.

However essential, it cannot act in the world.
It merely is.

So you need that Adult You, alias the Inner Parent, to get out there and be the sensible one.

The one who is able to make it happen.
Like an artist who needs inspiration (Inner Child) but also has to buy the paint and materials to put it into form (Inner Parent).

Becoming the Inner Parent is like growing up emotionally.

You see, there is still this idea that you have to wait for the Parents (or the world) to tell you that you are okay. To give you *permission* to become happy and fulfilled. Permission to live your own life fully, to be who you are without apologizing.

This waiting puts you on hold.

Like you need to fix things first before you are allowed to enjoy yourself. There you are, tool-box in your hand, postponing forever your trip to the Bahamas.

In acknowledging your childhood hurt and becoming your Inner Parent you heal your guilt and emotional dependence.

You heal the deep hurt at the core of your being.

You meet your own fears and awkwardness as long-lost friends.

(I feel like repeating this last sentence.)

What loving, powerful things to do!

By no longer diminishing yourself, you can finally enjoy your goodness. Your talents, your colors.

Even when they are weird and quirky.

Inner Parenting

So what does Inner Parenting look like?
How do you parent yourself?

The first thing you need to do is *connect* with the small person in you, the Inner Child. The second is to maintain and nurture that connection.

Connecting with your Inner Child is perhaps more complicated than you think. You had to ignore its needs for a long, long time, and you need to build trust and safety before the two of you can bond.

Meeting your Inner Child can be incredibly touching and beautiful, but it does take courage and determination to finally embrace this vulnerable part of yourself. Remember it was

once (and still may be!) your survival instinct to suppress its presence.

Again, it can be helpful to do this under guidance, preferably in a group, offering you the support and encouragement you may need to reach out.

Connecting with your Inner Child is not something that happens in the mind. It is a very physical, grounding experience. A cell-tissue-and-bone changer!

Once you have opened the freezer and melted and claimed its content, it is like an essential chunk of you that was missing returns. The hole you felt inside now fills up with something deeply familiar, a warm and playful presence.

But, as it goes, without nurturing this presence, the old Trick may become active again, and lure you right back into your old beliefs about yourself.

Even after the Prince and Princess are happily married for ever after, working on a good relationship is fundamental to staying open and happy. (Somehow they always forget to mention that in fairy tales.)

It simply takes practice and maintenance!
As often as you can!

In fact, you can practice bonding with your Inner Child all day:

By taking yourself seriously instead of ridiculing whatever you do.

By encouraging yourself and taking many moments to give yourself an inner hug.

By being kind to yourself when you feel sad, jealous, stupid, unattractive or a failure.

By not betraying yourself by playing small when you are not.

By not departing from yourself when in the company of others.

By trusting what you do.

By saying No to what you do not feel like doing.

By saying No to people who make you frequently unhappy and Yes to people who love or appreciate you.

By standing up for your truth.

By taking the time to listen to your Inner Child.

What works well is to have at least one moment a day when you physically connect with your Inner Child. What I mean with this is *sensing* its presence, almost like you make room for her or him in your body. Imagine holding it, hugging it, taking in its loveliness and aliveness. (A good moment for this can be in the morning, just after waking up, or right before you go to sleep.)

Some advice perhaps:

Good parenting doesn't mean treating your Inner Child like an infant. It's not a helpless creature that you talk to in a funny voice. This is actually still ignoring or belittling the authentic, boundless, ageless You.

Be aware of this.

Truth is equally important as Love to your Inner Child. She or he will know when you belittle, ignore or are dishonest. It will feel betrayed by that (as it should).

Another point worth mentioning:

No need to educate your Inner Child.

You made it to the grown up world already :-)

The sole role of the Inner Parent is to hold, love and accommodate: to nurture and bring back to life your authentic, playful self.

Having said this, let's move on to investigate some of the pitfalls in Inner Parenting....

Whenever you are ready.

Confusing the Inner Parent with the Inner Child

Truth to be told, Inner Parenting can be quite a challenge in the beginning.

One common difficulty is being confused about who the Inner Parent is. What often happens is that you think you are taking care of your Inner Child, while you are actually not.

This is why:

After you were wounded as a little one, you may have already created an adult. A little four year-old fake adult!

You see:

Part of you disappeared into the freezer.
Another part became the caretaker of the Parents.

It turned itself in a mini adult, trying to be strong.

In order to save the Parents, you may have believed they needed you to be:

- positive and light
- calming and reassuring
- the wise one
- easy (having no needs yourself)
- the one taking care of them physically
- the one detecting their needs and fulfilling them
- an ally against the Mean World

Recognize any of them?

In fact, you became their missing parent.

Presently, reading this book, you may want to heal your own Inner Child, and may accidentally activate the mini adult to do the job.

This is bound to go wrong.

I remember doing exactly this when I started to work with my Inner Child. I became a mini

adult. It exhausted me and one day I burst out into tears (now at that time I often did that, but I still remember this particular one).

I didn't feel up to the task!

I felt so terribly small and depleted!

Who was ever – finally – going to take care of *me*?!

Actually, this was not my Inner Adult speaking, but my mini adult. Who was still very young and very much in need of care herself. I just automatically presumed this was my Adult Self.

For the mini adult, parenting is like a sacrifice. A job that betrays something deep inside. The mini adult may feel rewarded when the Parents are thankful. It is the bonus it lives for. But deep down it feels alone and abandoned.

When the mini adult feels it has to take care of the Inner Child (its new assignment today) it may work itself up to the task. But it may

secretly hate the Inner Child as well. Another greedy someone who needs attention first!

So:

Whenever you feel you're not up to the task of Inner Parenting, you can be sure it is the little adult that is letting you know it needs care itself.

Remember, the little adult is actually the wounded Inner Child dressed up in adult clothes!

So who then is the True Inner Parent?
Where to find it in yourself?

The True Inner Parent is available the moment the Inner Child is loved by you.

Bit of a brain twister.

What it means is:

The True Inner Parent is already present in you, effortlessly. It is simply the grown-up you, plus your ability to love.

The grown-up you = the one capable of putting on clothes, pay a bill or go to the store to buy spaghetti.

Your ability to love = that wide, spacious feeling in your chest that makes you want to hug somebody. Or an animal. Or a thing.

The moment you can lovingly see or feel your Inner Child, you are the Inner Parent.

(Which is not difficult since your Inner Child is very adorable and cute, just like you.)

If you feel no love or understanding, or do not feel your Inner Child, you are under the spell of the Trick, looking with critical eyes.

So:

Whenever Inner Parenting feels like an effort: sit down and take care of your mini adult.

Give it love and understanding.

Tell it that it can be a child now.

So you can be the wonderful, capable adult you already are!

Earning the t-shirt of True Inner Parent

Bonding with your Inner Child is like learning a new skill. Which is wonderful but also frustrating sometimes.

- You may often totally forget about your Inner Child.
- You may get frustrated because you can't connect with it.
- You may be disappointed because your Inner Child is sad and silent.

Just keep trying.

It is a matter of building trust first.

When the little you feels safe and invited, she or he will come alive more and more.

Some Inner Children are quick to respond, others can remain silent or frozen for quite a while before you really connect.

As did mine. Until I realized I was actually still not entirely focusing on her, for fear of the rejection of my mother that that might entail.

Priority is key!

You can't do it by halves, throwing some sweets down the freezer from time to time. Healing the wound demands your full dedication and care.

It could also mean that while you are learning to love your Inner Child you need to take some – or quite some! – distance from people who keep you locked in guilt or uneasiness.

Like:

your mother

your father

other family members

people who trigger you too much (needy, unfriendly, bullying or boring ones)

I know. This is very scary. It means you *really* stand up for yourself now.

And take risks in doing so.

Like risking being thrown out of the clan.

Risking deeply hurting and disappointing the Parents.

Your Inner Child will be delighted though.

(Yes, it will be scared at first, but when you take the lead, it will come to trust you and flourish.)

I have found that practical steps, like taking distance or speaking your truth, are crucial in bonding with your Inner Child.

Daring to say No to my mother finally made Little Esther wake up from the dead. I had shown her I truly cared. No matter the consequences.

She felt safe now.

Step Three: Establishing Self Love

Welcome to the third step!
Happy to have you still here :-)

After you have gone through the process of the first two steps, you notice a change in yourself. You feel lighter, happier, more confident. Now that your inner wound is healing and you are supporting yourself instead of bringing yourself down, a wonderful shift takes place.

It is like your leaking boat is mended and you finally did the sailing course. And find that you are pretty good at surfing the waves! Pretty good at being you!
Wow!

And of course stuff will still surface: Your old friend Guilt may pay you a visit, Cousin Shame may try to get a grip on you again. You may feel sad or alone at times.

But these are merely clouds passing by.

You know how to get Home now.

You know how to reverse the Trick and warm your own heart.

In the end it is not about living happily under a spotless sky (there is no such thing).

It is not about being free from the Trick at all times (remember the scar tissue).

It is simply about feeling good in yourself (even when you feel battered or sombre).

Deeply, simply good.

Establishing Self Love is sinking deeper and deeper in the reality that you are safe. Safe in this ever-changing, moving river of life that will eventually take everything from you, but never this.

And you can still feel scared!
About losing your loved ones.
About life ending.
About your cat aging.
About change in general.

But underneath you may notice this okay-ness.
Like a warm smile, lighting up your cells.

It is telling the Trick it can retire now.
That its service is no longer required.
Without even blinking.

The joy of no longer diminishing yourself

Every time you remember your okay-ness, it is like tiny bubbles of joy emerging, the sheer joy of... being okay!

When you are no longer held down by a Critical Voice, is it amazing how your talents finally get the green light.

I used to beat myself up on a regular basis. I did that in general but especially when I was creating things. Like when I was writing. It wasn't a lack of ideas holding me back, but the whispers of Guilt and Shame that filled my head, asking me how I could ever think that people would care about what I was saying.

This really changed after going through the gate.

I now love the process of putting down my thoughts. And I am still amazed about the silence in my head.

No comments.

Just space to create.

We are all talented. In so many ways.

Talents so often wasted by believing we are not good enough. So often ridiculed by our own fear of being rejected.

They are like plants kept in a dark room without watering.

Loving yourself again is like finally opening the windows, putting new soil in the plant pots and watching them grow.

What will thrive and blossom:

-your gifts

-your power (we'll get to that in a moment)

-your true colors

You need not become successful or loved by the world.

You need no applause or a thousand Likes.

Others may not even notice the Big Change inside of you.

What is most important is the joy you feel in yourself by being you.

The rest is optional.

Meeting your power

Remember the angels I mentioned that come alive in the defrosting process?

Abundant qualities like boldness, lightness and trust?

There is another quality coming forward once you establish your Self Love (or perhaps you already bumped into it along the way).

Not an angel.

It is your Power, the unwavering one.

The one that could kill if necessary.

It's your raw anger.

It lives deep down in you, and carries tremendous strength.

It is the one you hid away behind veils of little flowers and politeness. The one you pretend to be shocked about.

That you banished to the world of bad people.

In fact, it is the one bringing you home. You need it to cut the cords, to stand up against Guilt and Shame. To stay awake!

You need it to claim your right to be.

Don't be afraid of it.

Don't let the Trick confuse you, telling you that you should always be reasonable and kind (the good daughter or son). Dare to be dangerous.

Dare to be powerful.

Take up space. You owe it to yourself.

Polishing the gem inside

Establishing Self Love is simply about remembering you are safe in yourself.

Two reminders:

1. Tell yourself (often) that you are Already Home.
2. Call on your Power when you get caught up in the flowery veil.

For example (1)

Whenever my mind spins off in a Trick story and at a certain point I wake up (mostly because I begin to feel sad, orphaned or formless), I say:

“But... you were home already! You are fine!”

It propels me right back into myself.

For example (2)

When I notice I am shattered and lose myself in the needs of others (mostly because I begin to feel stressed, unfocused or irritated) I remember my Power.

It cuts through the flowery veil in no time.

Putting me on my own two feet again.

(Just so you know: Don't think that I remember this all the time. I forget and then remember again.... it is an ongoing practice that allows you to become better and better at it.)

Question:

But why do you forget?

How can you get entangled when you have arrived already?

Good question.

I guess...

breaking a habit of a lifetime isn't easy.

It takes dedication, willingness and work (as mentioned before).

Establishing Self Love is like attending to a beautiful rose.

It needs care, attention, warmth and light.

And weeding.

So do you.

And what is more satisfying than looking after something precious? To dedicate your life to finding and polishing the gem inside? It is the best you have to offer, it's your happiness and beauty, the priceless truth about who you are.

4 Past the Gate

So here we are, you and me.

Standing in a wide open field beyond the gate,
a soft breeze touching our skin. We may look
into each other's eyes and see not what we
need, but what we are.

There is deep love and freedom in this.

Past the gate, all is different and yet all is the
same. Everything changed and yet nothing did.

You are still good old you.

You are still moody and stressed.

Still can't remember your bank number.

You may still feel sad about the loss of the
Parents, about letting go of the safe clan,
the safe story.

You may feel alone yet powerful.
Free and strong.
Ready to walk this new land.

Also

you may feel trapped again after a while,
encountering even deeper layers of unlove,
clouding your new found freedom.

This is not a set-back. It is merely a sign of
progress.

It is exactly how it should be.

Layers of unlove

Remember I mentioned that the three Steps of going through the gate were in truth a mysterious unfolding, moving in spirals instead of an orderly path going somewhere?

There is never a real moment of arriving.
There is only a melting of resistance and a letting go.

In this melting process, your self-image crumbles.

You see, your self-image was created by the Two-step Trick, a mind-modeled house of cards with a lot of exclamation marks written all over it.

Some of these beliefs about who you are crumble while going through the gate, others may only be ready to melt in the wide open space beyond it.

So do not feel discouraged when stuff comes up. And don't give up on yourself!

Take a breath and be willing to look again. Be willing to feel the hurt or the mist or the anger and dive right in. Connect with it, look for truth.

Freedom cannot be found; it will find you when you are ready to let go. This process cannot be rushed.

Deeper and deeper you go, embracing yet more layers of unlove within. And each time unlove is met and seen through, it is like you dissolve as well.

This is what I found:

When your inner house of cards crumbles, you
will not find a solid house underneath.

What you will find is emptiness.

Ever moving, filled to the brim emptiness, in-
viting you to let go of the last card.

And that

is yet

another adventure.

Some last words

You've come all this way!

You've melted what was frozen.

Grieved and cried about what wasn't there for
you.

Healed your core wound. Loved what was once
unloved and found yourself again.

It may feel like you have sailed solo around the
world!

In fact

you haven't moved an inch.

You simply freed your beliefs
about what was never damaged, never de-
stroyed.

Always right here.

You see, you didn't become a Better You.
You just became You.

And with these words
we've come to the end of this book.

A deep bow from me to you.

Past the Gate Workshops

If, after reading this book, you are interested in attending a Past the Gate Workshop with me, please go to my website www.estherteule.com for more information.

I'd love to meet you in person some day!



Thank yous

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