



FEAR CAN BE CONQUERED TO ALLOW A PERSON TO LEAD

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It is important for people to realize that if they are willing, they can step into a leadership position and help others. The ability to empower comes not from the position a person holds, but from a person's willingness to serve others. When a person has been consumed by fear, it takes much effort to become willing to reach out and help other abused individuals. Abuse survivors work through multiple layers of pain, grief, and loss as they try to find their true selves and their places in the world (Daniluk & Phillip, 2004). Abused individuals need the help of others to guide them through the healing process. A victim needs someone trustworthy to whom to disclose the trauma, and the servant-leader's attributes of honesty, integrity, and trust can be beneficial in helping an abused person. When a former victim is able to actualize her potential—not only due to her efforts, but also because people in her life were willing to prioritize her needs—she becomes “healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and... more servant-like [herself]” (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 8).

It was 1954, and I was seven years old when a man in a large dark car said, “Hey little girl, come over here—I want to show you something.” That was the beginning of my life being consumed by fear. After being kidnapped and raped by the man in the dark car, sexually abused by my father most of my young life, beaten in an attempted rape by someone I thought of as my grandfather when I was nineteen, and married for six years to a very abusive man, I had mentally become a terrified girl who could not look beyond surviving for the next hour or two. I did not discover how skewed my view of the world had become until my late forties. Becoming a leader was never even a glimmer in my dreams; I just wanted to be invisible and raise my sons. I was overwhelmed by fear and did not realize that my life could be improved until several people—who may not have even thought of themselves as leaders, let alone servant-leaders—reached out and helped me by giving encouragement and pointing out positive attributes I had developed.

Purposes of the Paper

This paper has two purposes. The first is to help people realize that there are individuals who have been so abused they live in a world of paralyzing fear. Such people either have no idea they are living and viewing the world through the lens of fear, or they are so beaten down they are unable to try to help themselves.

The second purpose of this paper is to show how someone can reach out and make a difference in abused individuals' lives. A person does not need to hold a formal leadership role to be willing to help others and to step out and become a servant-leader. Victims of abuse need someone to talk to who is empathetic, willing to listen, caring enough to want to help with their healing, and aware of the abuse and its effects. Ideally, that person will have a compelling, inspiring, and empowering vision for the victim's future and will communicate it with honesty and integrity. This vision will help build credibility (Kouzes & Posner, 1993). In 1970, Greenleaf coined a term for a person with these attributes: *servant-leader* (Spears, 1998). Liden, Wayne, Zhao, and Henderson (2008) designed research to validate the dimensions that define servant leadership. Through their research, they identified nine dimensions: (a) emotional healing, (b) creating value for the community, (c) conceptual skills, (d) empowering, (e) helping subordinates grown and succeed, (f) putting subordinates first, (g) behaving ethically, (h) relationships, and (i) servanthood.

In this paper, the healing process of moving from a terrified individual to a servant-leader is divided into four stages: (a) servant-leadership and living through the abuse (flexibility); (b) facing the abuse and the effects of abuse (awakening, an increasing sense of visibility, congruence, and connection); (c) relationships and a shift in worldview (a sense of regret over what has been lost, emerging sense of self-definition, and self-acceptance); and (d) using the past to help others in the present (empowerment, a sense of resiliency and growth) (Ferrell, 1996; Phillips & Daniluk, 2004). Through each of these stages, I will explore how an intervention by a loving, caring individual—a servant-leader—can have a positive effect on an abused individual immersed in fear.

Servant-Leadership and Living through Abuse

The general perception of a leader is someone who is the head of a corporation or a country, not someone who works with an individual on a one-to-one basis in order to help that person heal from an abusive past; yet that is exactly what a servant-leader can do. Whether a servant-leader is a pastor, a counselor, a former victim, or a friend, that person can play a key role in the healing process and help the individual believe she can have a worthwhile future.

Servant-leaders are able to maintain proper personal values to have a powerful and trustworthy influence on the person they are helping. When describing servant-leaders, Greenleaf explained:

It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served.

(1977, p. 7)

Greenleaf believed that the best test to determine whether a servant-leader is effective is to see whether the people she is serving grow as persons and become healthier, wiser, freer, able to function on their own, and more servant-like themselves (p. 8). Such leaders inspire hope and

courage in others by living out their convictions, facilitating positive images, and giving encouragement (Kouzes & Posner, 1993). When they prioritize the interests of the person they are helping, they demonstrate empathy and elicit trust (Bennis, 1997; Block, 1993; Greenleaf; Kouzes & Posner; Snodgrass, 1993). These attributes, as well as a commitment to others' growth, are all characteristics of a servant-leader (Spears, 1995).

A servant-leader can also encourage the terrified individual to face the fact that the abuse occurred and it is not healthy to pretend it never happened. Zupancic and Kreidler (1999) emphasized the importance of building trust with abused persons when guiding and gently encouraging them to reacquaint themselves with traumas they experienced while staying grounded in the present. Since abuse can begin at an early age, reacquainting a person with traumas that occurred over many years is a large endeavor.

For many, abuse starts in youth. About one-third of reported sexual abuse cases are perpetrated upon children under the age of six (Mian, Wehrspann, Klajner-Diamond, LeBaron, & Winder, 1986), although the average age is thought to be between seven and nine (Briere & Runtz, 1988; Dube & Hebert, 1988; Finkelhor, Hotaling, Lewis, & Smith, 1990). Unfortunately, the fear inside the child due to this abuse is not always evident. Since fear is a normal part of growing up, sometimes parents and others are not aware when fear begins to control a child's life.

Fear is an adaptive reaction to a real or imagined threat (Gullone, 1996, p. 144) and is a normal part of the development process (Morris & Kratochwill, 1985). But when fear is not age- or stage-specific and it persists over an extended period, it crosses over from normal fear to clinical fear (Gullone). Outside intervention is needed when fearfulness becomes a constant part of a child's life. If a child does not get help in dealing with her or his fears, the child will have persistent fears into adulthood (Goleman, 1988). Mrazek and Mrazek (1987) discussed how maltreated children carry out a restructuring of their painful experiences so they can reprocess past events in their own minds to make those experiences more acceptable or suitable. This type of reprocessing can lead to a serious departure from reality. Since fear becomes anxiety when it goes beyond the specific danger situation, outside intervention is very important in helping abused people begin to view the world realistically (Bourke & Reddy, 2005, p. 1). As Clough (2006) puts it, "Reason is only as good as the data on which it is based. Its effectiveness depends on the data that the reasoning individual has" (p. 23).

Facing the Abuse and the Effects of Abuse

An increasing number of children are mentally, physically, and sexually abused (Sileo, 1993). Ulrich (2005) estimated that 896,000 children were victims of abuse in the United States in 2002. She proposed that many undetected and unreported cases undoubtedly occurred. The more severe the abuse, the more severe the resulting behaviors become (Briere & Runtz, 1988; Browne & Finkelhor, 1986; Friedrich, Urquiza, & Beilke, 1986). Some of these behaviors include fearfulness, depression, self-destructive behavior (Browne & Finkelhor), higher levels of anxiety than normal (Briere & Rutz; Browne & Finkeihor; Friedrich et al.), and substance abuse (Browne & Finkelhor; Singer, Petchers, & Hussey, 1989).

Another negative state that develops due to sexual abuse is toxic shame. This type of shame keeps victims silent, especially since "in many cases, the abuse experience remains secret and hidden throughout a woman's life" (Kaufman, 1996, p. 5). Thus, shame creates "misery that jeopardizes a person's sense of self" (Pines, 1995).

Kaufman (1992) described how an interpersonal bridge is created through communication, caring, and trust with others. When this bond is severed or damaged because of abuse, shame results, causing the abused individual to internalize trauma. As this shame is internalized, the abused person develops a bad sense of self, or an inner sense of failure, which is reinforced by the person's perception of outside experiences. As the person hides more secrets over time, shame rules the person's life, inhibiting her emotional, spiritual, and psychological development.

Philosophers Humphrey and Dennett (1989) noted that dissociative identity disorder exists due to:

[P]rolonged early childhood abuse, usually sexual, and of sickening severity. These children have often been kept in such extraordinary terrifying and confusing circumstances that I am more amazed that they survive psychologically at all than I am that they manage to preserve themselves by a desperate redrawing of their boundaries. What they do, when confronted with overwhelming conflict and pain, is this: They "leave." They create a boundary so that the horror doesn't happen to them; it either happens to no one, or to some other self. (pp. 68-98)

This type of fearful environment and abuse stifles the growth of a child.

Carl Rogers' (1980) famous example of observing potatoes sprouting in a cold cellar speaks directly to the point of a child trying to grow up in an abusive environment. Rogers described how the potatoes would grow, but didn't thrive. The sad, spindly sprouts would never fulfill their real potential. But even under the worst circumstances, the sprouts never gave up, even though they could not flourish. This is analogous to what happens to an abused child. These children grow but are unable to attain their potential.

Flexibility is one of four major themes of healing identified by Farrell (1996) in her qualitative study of women recovering from abuse, along with awakening, relationship, and empowerment. In another study, Phillips and Daniluk (2004) defined the healing themes as: a) an increasing sense of visibility, congruence, and connection; b) an emerging sense of self-definition and self-acceptance; c) a shift in worldview; d) a sense of regret over what has been lost; and e) a sense of resiliency and growth. The themes from these studies are essential components of the healing process, and the attributes of a servant leader are integral in helping the abused individual successfully move from one level of healing to another.

When trauma is hidden, either knowingly or unknowingly, the resulting problems are never addressed and healing cannot take place. As children grow into adulthood, the repercussions of childhood trauma continue to plague them. Fear and shame continue to grow and consume the individual, and "suffocation of all feelings continues until they receive help in undoing the shame and working through their feelings" (Zupancic & Kreidler, p. 29). Integration and connection with the past and present events are ongoing processes.

Survivors of childhood sexual abuse can develop many cognitive distortions to be carried into adulthood (Zupancic & Kreidler, 1999). They may discover that their experiences have tainted their views of the world, and part of healing can include trying to identify truth and which perceptions were skewed due to the abuse. Recognizing this duality and changing one's beliefs is a very difficult process for abused persons. As they begin to heal, they realize that as children they used denial, dissociation, and numbing to survive their abuse (Zupancic & Kreidler). As adults, "they judge themselves as bad, weak and shameful. They deny their feelings of helplessness, powerlessness and anger. Keeping themselves nonreactive and shame-filled costs survivors personal fulfillment and wholeness" (Zupancic & Kreidler, p. 32).

This is where an intervention by a servant-leader could save the life of an individual—not just the physical life, but the prospective useful, happy, and fulfilled life an individual could experience. An abused person needs to be able to talk to someone trustworthy about her experiences. Honesty, integrity, and trust are very important attributes of a servant-leader that can offer great comfort and reassurance to an abused person. The servant-leader can help the abused person “restore the ability to feel good about...[herself]... and uncover the survivor’s goodness and her right to exist. It is important that each woman recognize the courage and creativity it took to survive” (Zupancic & Kreidler, p. 33).

An Emerging Sense of Self-Definition and Self-Acceptance, and a Shift in Worldview

A good analogy of how an abused person perceives life is revealed in Plato’s *Allegory of the Cave*. Plato portrays a scenario of prisoners who have been chained since childhood deep inside a cave. The prisoners see on the cave walls only the shadows of real people who are outside, but, never having been outside or seen such people, they mistake the shadows for reality (Grube, 1992). Like the prisoners in Plato’s allegory, abused individuals are chained by misconception. They unknowingly create small links of fear and abuse that are welded together day by day, year after year. Because they live with abuse and fear continuously, they believe the distorted images on the cave walls are reality. They have no idea that years of living in isolation and fear have left them with a distorted view of the world. As these children grow into adulthood, they are still under the sad delusion that the evil and corruption portrayed on the walls is all the world has to offer them. But Plato offered help in the form of an individual intervention.

Plato did not use the term *servant-leader*, but he stressed the importance of someone helping the prisoner to understand that the images on the walls are only distorted visions and do not represent all the world contains. The prisoner needed to be escorted to the opening of the cave to gain some insight into what the world encompasses. This help is essential to the abused person, and this is how a servant-leader can be beneficial in helping the abused individual. Spears (1998) listed three central characteristics of the servant-leader as listening, empathy, and healing. These attributes are also essential in helping an abused person. Listening is important to identify and clarify what the person is trying to convey. Trust is built when the servant-leader demonstrates empathy by accepting the individual for where she is in life and the circumstances she has endured. From this point, healing, the potential for making broken spirits whole, is possible. Greenleaf (1977) explained that servant-leaders are healers in that they help other people to attain a greater vision and purpose than they probably would have been able to achieve on their own. In this way, servant-leaders help provide what traumatized individuals need: “the motivation to improve and the ability to do so if they really want to make positive changes in their life” (Deci & Ryan, 1994, pp. 3-14).

With the help of the servant-leader, a person (in this case an abused person who is consumed by fear) can begin to see the light of hope. The servant-leader can help the individual discover that she has developed strengths to cope with and survive tragedies, and can now pass this information on to other people to help them not only survive abuse, but grow and develop into more loving, helpful people (Van Toledo, 2007).

John Briere (1992) noted that it is very important for adults who are still struggling with childhood adversity to acknowledge the hurts they experienced as children and to know it is acceptable to seek help in learning how to deal with these issues. During the beginning stages of healing, the abused person’s identity is completely intertwined with the abuse. The person is so

engulfed in the pain of the abuse that there is no room for her to discover who she is outside of that trauma (Daniluk & Phillips, 2004). To use Plato's allegory, when adults are led to the light at the opening of the cave, they are able to view the aftermath of difficulties experienced in childhood and explore ways of strengthening themselves against adversity and increasing their self-esteem and self-awareness. Prior to being led to the light, the abused person was confused about the world as a result of the trauma. The person also suffered from shattered or distorted assumptions about herself, others, and the nature of the social environment that offers an emotional context for life (Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995). It is a huge breakthrough when an abused person realizes that it is not what hurts him that matters, but how he deals with the hurt (Ricco, 1991 p. 4). Accepting this belief is extremely difficult yet freeing. Once a person sees the light of hope, she is faced with making a difficult decision. Even though the cave of an abused person's environment appears to be dark, cold, and full of the fears of abuse, it is still preferred over the unknown. When the individual looks out into the light of the world, it appears that hope and many possibilities of happiness are present. But the individual faces the possibility that even more pain may be encountered, possibly even worse pain than the person has already experienced. When an individual has lived a life of fear and pain and the deep wounds have yet to heal, this is an incredibly scary decision to make. James (1956) described that people make decisions based on prior experiences, but to escape a dangerous situation requires dangerous leaps of faith. With the help of a servant-leader and great courage, an abused person can take the first leap of many into a future with wonderful possibilities.

Fortunately, great progress has been made in the process of working with abused persons. One important change in helping children and adults overcome a past of abuse is the switch from pointing out all the problems an individual has to helping the person discover all her strengths. This swing of the pendulum away from looking for deficits and dysfunctions is supported by recent research on resilience (Garmezy, 1981; Rutter, Giller, & Hagell, 1998; Werner & Smith, 1992; Werner & Smith, 1977; Wolin & Wolin, 1993), asset building (Benson, 1997), positive youth development (Pittman & Irby, 1996), and influential ideas such as the Circle of Courage (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 2002) and family privilege (Seita & Brendtro, 2002). One can choose to look at and speak of the negative aspects of life, or to focus on the strengths she has developed due to these circumstances. This paradigm shift of focusing on positive rather than negative aspects of an abused person's life helps victims to recognize the impact they can have on their own lives, as well as on the lives of others, as they begin to build a connection between awareness and action. In this process, according to Markova & Holland, an individual must "understand the best of what is, imagine what could be, and work in partnership with others to create what will be by translating what we value into what we do" (2005, p. 30). The authors added, "As the individual heightens his awareness of his value as a person, he is able to shift in perspective from problem solving to building on what he knows he can do well" (p. 30). As a person realizes all she has to offer, she can share these life lessons, become a leader of tomorrow, and help develop other servant-leaders.

Using the Past to Help Others in the Present

One of the most important aspects of healing for an abused person is the ability to share information learned with others. Lempert (1994) observed that when women begin to share their stories of abuse, their "linguistic tools serve to order experiences, construct reality, and creatively make sense of their violent intimate relationships" (p. 410). A servant-leader can help the abused

person understand how she has developed strengths to cope with and survive tragedies. Lambert (1992) discussed how important it is for the abused individual to perceive that the helping person is warm, trustworthy, nonjudgmental, and empathetic. There is a built-in drive to reduce pain, pursue long-term goals for happiness, and improve interpersonal relationships as the abused person continues to develop self-esteem (Clough, 2006).

As individuals begin to understand the strengths that they possess, they can explore ways to fortify themselves against adversity and increase their self-esteem and self-awareness (Van Toledo, 2007). These strengths will become the building blocks laid down to form the foundation of truth in their lives—the truth of their abuse and the truth that a greater person will develop from the sum of their experiences. As these individuals face the counterproductive coping strategies that were developed and used in childhood, they can work on new and more effective ways of dealing with adversities. Individuals have the opportunity to:

[I]dentify things they may have learned because of hardships experienced as children and how these events have made them more resilient as adults. It allows the person to be validated for their experiences, and makes it acceptable to acknowledge childhood adversity. (Van Toledo, 2007, p. 1)

Not only is it important to recognize the strengths that have been developed due to past adversities, but it is also important to recognize the limitations and difficulties experienced and come up with ways for dealing with these problems (Briere, 1992). With the help of other traumatized people, abused persons can work through the hurts experienced in childhood in a positive and empowering way (Van Toledo, 2007). By using a strengths-based approach to working with abused individuals, servant-leaders, especially those who have also lived through abuse, can help abused individuals feel empowered as they go through the healing and rebuilding process. This empowerment will help the person who is in the process of healing to help others. Abused children have various strengths that can be identified, tapped, shaped, buttressed, and used to create and support powerful caring environments for healing (Brendtro, Ness, & Mitchell, 2001; Seita & Brendtro, 2002). As these former victims recognize their strengths and develop resilience, they can help themselves break down the walls of fear.

A significant shift occurs in the abused person's identity in the move from the perception of the self as a victim to the perception of the self as a survivor (Bass & Davis, 1988; Courtois, 1988; 1999; Draucker, 1992; Herman, 1992; Matsakis, 1996). Ultimately, abused persons need to let go of the survivor identity in order to allow more positive aspects of their identity to emerge. They will eventually see the world as being full of possibilities instead of danger and pain (Crowley, 2000; Grossman, Cook, Kepkep, & Koenen, 1999).

Howard and Johnson (1998) defined resilience as “the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances” (p.1). It is through this process of successful adaptation that individuals develop skills to survive and help others. As they change their perspective, seek out what works, and create images of where they want to go, they will be better able to keep up with the changes in their lives (Watkins & Mohr, 2001). Once they incorporate this new way of thinking into their lives, they will be able to help others. As abused individuals realize the strengths they have developed and can share, they realize that they can demonstrate the change they want to see in the world. They are no longer merely victims or survivors of a traumatic past; their lives contain many other facets, and they become aware that they can positively influence others (Daniluk & Phillip, 2004). They identify the abuse as an experience they had, not who they are (Josselson, 1996), and they can move forward and help others; they have the ability to be servant-leaders.

Conclusion

It is important for people to realize that if they are willing, they can step into a leadership position and help others. Burns (1978) asserted that one of the most important calls of our time is the call for leadership. Leaders are needed to mentor abused individuals. The ability to empower comes not from the position a person holds, but from a person's willingness to serve others. As illustrated in Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*, these individuals need to be led to the light of truth. They are not merely victims of sexual abuse (Daniluk & Phillip, 2004) who should be content to hide silently in shame (Kaufman, 1996). Through the process of surviving their traumas, they developed resilience and self-esteem to help perceive their value and the difference they can make in the lives of others (Van Toledo, 2007).

When a person has been consumed by fear, it takes her a lot of time and effort to become willing to reach out and help other abused individuals. Abuse survivors need to work through multiple layers of pain, grief, and loss as they try to find their "true" self and their place in the world (Daniluk & Phillip, 2004). This journey is categorized as having four stages. The first stage is when the person was abused, whether it was one incident or a lifetime of abuse. Usually the abused person does not receive help at this point because she is too fearful and ashamed to let anyone know what is happening (Kaufman, 1996). Victims either withdraw into themselves or restructure their experiences in order to endure their traumatic life (Mrazek & Mrazek, 1987).

In the second stage, someone helps the abused person face the fact that the abuses occurred, as well as the type of effects the abuses have had on her life. It takes a great deal of strength for the abused person to view her trauma and make the choice to move forward and heal (Zupancic & Kreidler, 1999). The victim needs someone trustworthy to disclose the trauma, which is why the servant-leader's attributes of honesty, integrity, and trust can be beneficial in helping an abused person.

The third stage involves the healing process, where survivors need others to guide them. Gardner (2003) stressed that keeping hope alive is one of the primary functions of a leader. Hope enables the abused person to move forward. In time they will see the world as full of possibilities instead of danger (Crowley, 2000; Grossman, Cook, Kepke, & Koenen, 1999).

When abused people are willing to become servant-leaders and reach out to help others, they have reached the final stage of healing. These former "victims" have developed wisdom, understanding, compassion, and a strong sense of resiliency through their healing process (Daniluk & Phillips, 2004). When a person feels she has value and purpose, she can conquer anything. She eventually reaches a point in her healing where she likes and is proud of who she is (Daniluk & Phillips, 2004). She realizes that she is no longer a "victim" or a "survivor," but a person who can have a positive impact on the lives of other people. That individual has become a servant-leader. She was able to actualize this potential not only due to her own efforts, but also because of people in her life who were willing to help, thereby becoming "healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and... more servant-like themselves" (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 8).

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