

Background

Children grow and develop in stages. Each developmental stage involves a set of needs that should be met by parents or caregivers. The degree to which developmental needs were not adequately met may be the degree to which a person is stuck in childhood. **Being stuck** means that behaviors, beliefs, or emotions connected to unresolved childhood experiences can still be triggered today. For example, a person feels confident one minute – then, after something upsetting happens, suddenly sees the world through the eyes of a sad, angry, or fearful child. This may explain why people have behaviors, beliefs, or emotions that they do not like or want, but cannot stop.

Getting Stuck

It is easy to understand how a child may become stuck when parents are abusive, rejecting, or neglectful. But a child can even become stuck when parents are very caring. This can happen if a well-meaning caregiver fails to parent well enough, because a child's needs are particularly complex or obscure; a caregiver has unresolved emotional issues; a caregiver is under extreme stress; or a caregiver experiences hardships (e.g. financial problems, health problems, natural disasters) that make it impossible for him/her to meet needs he/she would otherwise be able to meet. Children get confused when they feel their needs are ignored, misunderstood, or trivialized – whether intentionally or unintentionally. When this happens often enough, a child will get stuck in those experiences.

When there is a good match between a child's needs and a caregiver's parenting skill, the child will grow up feeling secure. When such a match is not so good, a child will accumulate emotional baggage. The bigger the mismatch, the more baggage accumulates.

Parts of Self

Everyone has parts of self. We've all experienced ambivalence when one part of self wants to eat healthy while another part wants to eat junk. We all have different states of mind for our different roles – for example a professional-work self, which is different from a playful-parent self, which is different from a romantic-spouse self.

Parts of self can form when positive and negative experiences are repeated, or when a trauma is overwhelming. Positive experiences create healthy parts that live in the present. Upsetting experiences (such as abuse, rejection, or neglect) form wounded parts that are stuck in the painful past.

Parts of self that are stuck in the past can have competing agendas, which lead to internal conflicts. These conflicts can generate unwanted behaviors, beliefs, and emotions. For example we may want to be patient, but act impatiently instead. Or we may want to feel safe, but feel anxious instead. Or we may know we are worthwhile, but feel worthless.

DNMS Resources

In the DNMS, special guided meditations are used to help a client connect to three Resource parts of self: a **Spiritual Core Self** (or **Core Self**), a **Nurturing Adult Self**, and a **Protective Adult Self**.

Spiritual Core Self: This Resource is considered the core of one's being – the part of self experienced during meditation, prayer, peak spiritual experiences, and enlightening near-death experiences. It may have existed before the body arrived and may exist after the body dies. For those of faith, this Resource would be the part of self that resonates with divine love from a higher power. Connecting to this Resource does not require a belief in God or spirituality. Clients averse to notions of faith are guided to connect to a **Core Self**.

Nurturing & Protective Adult Self: Most people have all the skills needed to be a good enough caregiver, whether they're aware of it or not. A caregiver

skill that was applied just once in the past can be applied again in the future. The DNMS uses two guided meditations to heighten awareness of these skills. One meditation strengthens a **Nurturing Adult Self** (a part of self that can competently nurture a loved one), the other strengthens a **Protective Adult Self** (a part of self that can competently protect a loved one). The process is anchored in a personal memory of a meaningful relationship – current or past – a favorite time when all or most of the skills on a list of 24 caregiver skills and traits were naturally, effortlessly, and appropriately applied.

The Healing Circle

Once a client connects to a *Spiritual Core Self*, a *Nurturing Adult Self*, and a *Protective Adult Self*, the three Resources are invited to join together to form a team – called a **Healing Circle**. Later, wounded parts of self will be invited into the Healing Circle, where the Resources will meet their developmental needs, help them process through painful emotions, and establish an emotional bond. This will help them heal and get unstuck from the past.

Reactive Parts

A **reactive part** is a wounded part of self we form in reaction to someone's wounding abuse, neglect, rejection, or enmeshment. Some reactive parts hold raw emotions, like anxiety, terror, anger, sadness, hopelessness, grief, despair, or shame. Some hold details of traumatic experiences. Some engage in "coping" behaviors such as overeating, starving, pleasing, intimidating, overachieving, drinking, withdrawing, etc. Because reactive parts are stuck in the past, reliving old wounding experiences, they drive many of our present day unwanted behaviors, beliefs, and emotions, such as anxiety, depression, anger, withdrawing, perfectionism, eating disorders, substance abuse, etc. All reactive parts have good intentions, no matter how problematic their behavior may be. All reactive parts can be healed.

Maladaptive Introjects

We automatically and unconsciously form internal, mental representations of people significant to us – like parents, siblings, teachers, peers, etc. These mental representations, called **introjects**, are parts of self that mimic the people they represent. This mimicking is not a choice – it's a biological reflex driven by mirror neurons. *Adaptive introjects* mimic those people who were supportive, loving, and kind to us. But **maladaptive introjects** mimic people who were unkind, neglectful, abusive, or rejecting. They convey the unkind person's wounding message to our reactive parts – keeping them stuck in the past, reliving their old wounding experiences.

Getting Unstuck

The DNMS aims to get maladaptive introjects totally unstuck from the past by guiding the Resources to provide for them now, the loving, nurturing, protective relationship they need to facilitate emotional repair. The Resources join with these wounded parts to meet their unmet needs, help them process through painful emotions, and establish an emotional bond. As these needs get met, the maladaptive introjects begin to feel safe, wanted, and loved. Once completely healed, they stop mimicking the wounding person(s) and begin to express their own good true nature instead. Once healed, they no longer evoke internal conflicts – no longer upset and intimidate reactive parts. So the associated unwanted behaviors, beliefs, and emotions spontaneously diminish.

This process can be helpful in healing parts of that are self stuck at any age, but because we're especially powerless and vulnerable in childhood, it's especially helpful for healing wounded child parts. A child part that's healed lives in the present moment and will not get triggered by reminders of a painful past.