



When the wound reopens, there is the opportunity to close it differently

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We get wounded in many ways. Some of the most frequent are through bullying and other forms of abuse. These can occur throughout our life, but often happen, and are the most damaging, when we are children. Although very few of my clients come to see me for bullying or abuse – they come for issues such as confidence, self-esteem, finding their purpose, or sorting out their life, at least 80% mention at some stage having been bullied during their school years. And for all of them it was excruciatingly painful.

At various stages clients – male and female - can start talking about their experiences of being bullied in primary school and in high school. Not only is the bullying hurtful leading them to believe, “I never fit in”, “I always feel like I am in the wrong”, “I will never have any friends”, “People don’t like me or want to be around me,” but the responses of other significant adults around also hurts them. In one instance a teacher was on the side of the bully because the teacher’s daughter was the bully. That was not too awful for this client, and in fact was even expected. However, when parents do not support their child as the child would like them and need them to when told about the bullying, it is particularly painful - perhaps even worse than the bullying.

Often when the bullying happens, those being bullied make sense of the experience by telling themselves they are bad, something is wrong with them, no one will ever like them, they will never fit in. They see themselves as defective, they see others as untrustworthy, cruel, and to be avoided, and the world is seen as an unsafe and unhappy place. Often the adults around just reinforce those beliefs by acting in an unsupportive way.

Sometimes when someone is bullied those around them do the right thing. Their experience is affirmed, they are valued and listened to, and sometimes even justice is served. Often though it is not.

When you retell your story – whether it be to a therapist, counsellor, good friend, loving person – you are going back to that time and place of hell. The wound opens. If you tell your story to the right person, this time, as you open up, make yourself vulnerable, and share your story and your pain, you have the opportunity to close the wound differently. There is the opportunity for a different ending. One where you are listened to, understood, and validated. One where you are treated with gentleness and kindness and respect. One where you get to understand that whatever made those bullies behave like they did (and oh my clients are extremely understanding of what may have made those bullies behave badly, being ready to forgive anything), they were still in the wrong. Hurting people is not okay, whatever the story behind the person inflicting the hurt.

When the wound opens, you also have the opportunity to be gentle and kind to yourself. I am a great believer in reparenting the self, and when you reopen your wounds, this is especially the time to speak and act gently and kindly towards yourself. All that love and generosity and kindness you so readily dispense to others, start giving to yourself. Eventually the wound will close up much healthier this time around with better beliefs of yourself, others and the world.

If you think you need help or someone to talk to, then find someone and get the help you need.