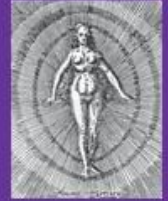


CHARLYNE GELT, PH.D.

Encouraging Self-Discovery and Empowerment



Emotional Liberation by Charlyne Gelt, Ph.D.

I hope you had a wonderful 4th of July as we celebrated our nation's independence!



"In the truest sense, freedom cannot be bestowed; it must be won."
Franklin D. Roosevelt

July 4, Independence Day, the Spirit of '76, honors a people who freed themselves from the tyranny of power and control over their lives by a foreign country, Great Britain. Oppression by a self-acclaimed ruler represents an archetype found throughout history. Whenever a ruler, king, despot, bully, or demagogue rigidly holds power with a chokehold grip, cruelly disregarding the human rights of a population he/she is supposed to protect, it takes a tragic human toll, the impact of which often lasts for generations. Can we not see the handwriting on the wall? America's great divide with Great Britain, however, had a positive outcome, cracking open a transformational experience for our fledgling nation.

Many of our grandparents, including my own, fled oppression and came to this great country in the hope of establishing a new life that included the promise of freedom and the pursuit of happiness. However, once their personal goals were achieved, such advantages can become a comfortable shoe and we can forget that our political freedoms were hard-won, that they are still fragile, and if we fail to maintain them, we may lose them. It is all too easy for a nation to slip into complacency and ruin.

Freedom in Personal Relationships

Similarly, it takes work to obtain and maintain our *emotional* freedoms in our personal relationships. In the tyranny of a dysfunctional coupling, one partner may be treated unfairly or objectified by a controlling partner. What if you're in a marriage or partnership in which you feel like a "ghost" — don't count, invisible, oppressed, or

emotionally controlled by a partner? What signs inform you that you have stayed *overtime* in a situation that is weighing you down? And what beliefs or fears about relationships have blindsided you, causing you to ignore the internal messages that could lead to growth and change? Perhaps you learned how to be an “invisible ghost” while growing up, internalizing family lessons of emotional submissiveness and helplessness without even realizing it. In order to *fight for your emotional liberation*, you are going to have find the courage to face your unhappy situation, build up your ego strength, and expand your reservoir of responses in order to successfully break free.

Personal boundaries and walls

While nations argue about national boundaries and walls, in our own personal lives we need to learn how to develop and maintain *healthy* boundaries to keep from being enmeshed, swallowed up or controlled by another. A boundary is a limit or an edge that defines you from me. Unlike walls, healthy boundaries don't keep people out, but rather act as a container, bring order, help us gain a sense of self and empower us to determine our own thoughts and feelings, and how we want to be treated by others. Intact boundaries are clear and flexible, and enable one to be separate, and offer a sense of well-being

However, in dysfunctional families, healthy boundaries are not known, or they are disregarded. Instead, there are emotional walls that lock out different, and lock-in fear. They are used to punish, intimidate, and control. The family despot may impose rigid rules and regulations on family members causing them to experience psychological pain, trauma, and fear. They feel stifled. Locked-in by walls of fear, such suffering individuals need to get out of the victim position and learn compassionate emotional tools for the care and repair of their own souls!

Hidden Rules in Relationships

In the realm of human relationships, “Independence Day” involves a different kind of freedom – *emotional* freedom. What unconscious beliefs or fears about relationships have blindsided you, causing you to ignore or repress the internal messages that could lead to growth and change?

In most relationships there are hidden rules, a fact that many of us fail to recognize when we embark on a new love relationship. Eventually we discover that we have unspoken expectations of the other which we probably learned in our family of origin. For example, “*Be mine.*” What does that mean? Our beliefs and myths about love relationships also come to us by way of stories (and their unspoken messages), or from what we hear going on in the household, or from what we see on television about what we should look forward to in our adult lives. Romantic love is idealized in fairy tales, such as *Cinderella*, *Snow White*, *Sleeping Beauty*, and *Beauty and the Beast*. They tell us that “Someday My Prince Will Come,” and therefore we can expect to rescue or be rescued.

Non-violent communication expert, Marshall Rosenberg, Ph.D., defines emotional slavery as believing ourselves responsible for the feelings of others, therefore compelled to do something about it. Continued enmeshment is the result. Your freedom closes down because you believe you have to take care of *me*. If your relationships feel like “emotional slavery,” it's time to find a way out of that inner prison. The cost of assuming responsibility for the feelings of others is too high — loss of self, swallowed-up, overwhelmed, smothered. It makes sense to uncover and move from whatever unconscious beliefs (abandonment, fear of losing the self) keep you from the intimacy and closeness you desire.

Just as Independence Day in this country represents the moment in time when our nation was ready to break free, so, too, there is a moment in time when we must identify and accept responsibility for our own feelings and needs, then take the necessary actions to do something about them. Then, we may celebrate our own hard-won *emotional* independence.

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