

Finding a Loving Higher Power and Inner Parent That Works for Every Part

A Workshop by John+

Introduction

An essential part of all 12-Step processes is finding a Higher Power—something that is greater than our small selves, that provides survivors with something or someone to grab onto and use to remember life's fullness with when one is lost in emotional flashbacks—small self's memories of repressed horror and pain.

I remember when I first started my 12-step journey that about all I was able to handle was being willing to be open to the concept of Higher Power. At that point, some 21 plus years ago, that's about all I could imagine. Although I knew that there was some force or energy that created the universe, I was unable to wrap myself around the idea that there was a Higher Power who could assist me in my day to day travails. I didn't believe there was a Higher Power that cared about me. I didn't believe, to be honest, that I was worthy of anyone's support.

Needless to say, some 21 years into this healing process my perspectives have shifted. They've changed as a result of working the steps in AA, ACA, CoDA and SIA. They've changed as a result of ongoing parts work in order to uncover, discover and release that pain, shame, self-blame, anger, terror and grief that I had to repress in order to survive.

Today, I can state unequivocally, that finding a loving Higher Power of my own understanding has been an essential aspect of my healing and growing processes. Without a loving Higher Power that all my parts can relate to, call on and rely on in times of challenge and difficulty, I don't think that I'd be here today. I don't think that my parts and I are worthy of unconditional support, compassion and acceptance without the support of a loving Higher Power. Without that support I would have continued to bludgeon myself with my blunders and flay myself with my shame.

That said, how does one—especially a split someone who has many different parts of many different ages—come to find a supportive Higher Power that works for every part? Moreover, what does that loving Higher Power look like and how does it operate so as to help in the midst of PTSD flashbacks, trigger cascades and parts that don't want to cooperate or are engaged in unmanageable, codependent responses as if their lives depended upon it?

This workshop will assist each of us in manifesting or making more conscious a loving Higher Power/loving Inner Parent-Coach-Friend that each of us can grab onto in times of profound stress, unmanageability and perceived danger.

Personal Perspectives on What Hangs Us Up with Finding a Loving Higher Power

God is a loaded term for many survivors. This state of being is understandable given our abuse. Our first Higher Powers were the individuals who were supposed to nurture and care for us and those very people abused us. As a consequence, many survivors came to believe that those with power—the authority figures in our lives—were bad, would betray us, and ultimately abandon us. Moreover, we came to mistrust ourselves, our motives, our autonomy, and our ability to act in behalf of our greatest good.

Trust in higher self, trust in Higher Power, and trust in our basic worthiness was destroyed. As a result, believing in a loving Higher Power, whether that Higher Power is an internalized value system or a God/Goddess is all but impossible.

So how does one grow this valuable aspect of being? How does one learn to trust in self, in life, and in one's possibilities? How does one build an internal and external foundation of support to stand upon in the midst of PTSD and emotional flashback storms? This workshop will provide you with insights into this process.

Two General Types of loving Higher Power

1. Value System
2. God/Goddess, Mystical Universe, Maker, Creator, Mother/Father

Shared Qualities between the two above concepts as it relates to step and parts work:

- Of our own understanding
- Something to grab onto in the midst of challenge
- A quality to trust in/use as a litmus test for decision making and acting

Discovering/Acknowledging/Manifesting—Keys to Growing Loving Inner Parent & Higher Power

How to Find and Define a Loving Higher Power of Our Own Understanding

1. Discovering HP Qualities

Use the Sanities List (Column 5) From 1st Step Workbook:

What to Do When Reactive or Wanting to Act Out/Run from Feelings & Thoughts

- Acknowledge the feeling
- Remind yourself you are not to blame
- Check in with inner kid(s) to comfort and reassure
- Use (state & apply) recovery slogans
- Journal/step work/parts work/process
- Create safe space
- Prayer and meditation
- Connect with Higher Power
- Call trusted recovery friend/therapist/sponsor/recovery partner
- Re-set limits, even if temporarily
- Remind self that it's normal to have challenging feelings given my life experiences and that it's okay to feel, express and seek healthy comforting while having challenging feelings
- Try to separate the past from the present when a current situation triggers an emotional response that seems entirely out of proportion to the stimulus. (This often decreases the intensity of the feeling in relationship to the present tense person/situation that's triggering the emotion).
- Remind self that in the present I am safe.
- Remind self that I am more than my current experience and that there are more parts to me than the one consciousness is currently inhabiting
- Return the feeling the feeling to its source
- Avoid beating self up for feeling and/or responding to feeling in relapse/victim manner
- Remember I can go as slow or as fast as I want in working through repressed feelings
- Remember that I've survived the situations that gave rise to my repressed/stored feelings
- Remember that as I learn to do deep pain work it becomes easier to do
- Remember the freedom I receive by walking in as opposed to running from my truth
- Others:

The above list reveals that my loving Higher Power has what qualities? Underline the ones that apply.

Accepting, adaptable, altruistic, balanced, beautiful, calm, cheerful, confident, courageous, creative, curious, empathetic, expressive, faithful, good, hopeful, humorous, interested, loving, non-judgmental, open, peaceful, powerful, serene, stable, tolerant, understanding, wise.

Other:

2. Acknowledging HP is Already Operating Inside of Us

For Higher Power to open up the most possibilities for healing with us, we need to own that Higher Power is operating within us and can be tapped into as needed. Proof that there is already a loving Higher Power operating inside of us can begin to be accepted when we inventory our positive attributes. Check the one's below that apply to you and add any others you can think of.

My Positive Attributes (check the ones that apply to you)

- I'm helpful
- I'm concerned
- I am in recovery because I recognize the problem and want to heal
- I don't want to hurt others—I want to help them
- I strive to be honest with myself
- I try to own my mistakes when I make them, try to learn from them and make amends to myself and others when needed
- I want to manifest my possibilities, needs and dreams
- I do good things for myself and others
- Other positive attributes you'd like to list:

For those doing part's work already: Which parts of you embody any of the positive attributes you've just listed?

3. Manifesting Higher Power

The process of manifesting Higher Power is largely a matter of realizing that it exists in us and giving ourselves to that support. That said, the more we practice, the stronger our loving Inner Parent becomes.

Elements:

- Practicing showing up
- Creating a safe place within to stand upon
- Situating all parts as equals who are worthy of respect

Practice: Methods for growing a healthy observer & loving Inner Parent/loving Higher Power depends on practice

- Stepping Out of triggered selves & and into the observer/loving Inner Parent
- Communication Methods

The Acknowledgement—Normalization—Compassionate Support Method

Speaking from the observer/loving inner parent prompts

Messages that Acknowledge

- I know . . .
- I hear you.
- Oh, you seem to be . . .
- Tell me more about it/I want to know what's going on?
- That's a lot—is there more?
- What are you feeling?
- Others:

Messages that Normalize

- It's normal to feel (insert feeling) . . .
- It's normal to feel (insert feeling), especially given what you've been through . . .
- It's okay to (cry/shout/isolate/beat yourself up) . . .
- It makes sense that you'd . . .

- Others:

Messages that Provide Compassionate Support

- I love you . . .
- I won't abandon you . . .
- I won't leave you alone . . .
- Oh, I'm so sorry. What can I do to help?
- What would make you feel safe right now?
- Big (your name) will always protect you and keep you safe.
- I'll handle this situation—you don't have to.
- Do you want me to tuck you in to your safe place?
- Others:

Taking it back to Source Communication Method

In this method all of the aspects of the Acknowledgement—Normalization—Compassionate Support Method are used, but additionally, the inner part is asked what triggered the response in the present and what the present situation reminded the part of about the past. The purpose of this type of response is to break the connection between the unresolved trigger from the past and the situation in the present (therefore making it easier to show up for the present situation in a less charge or triggered fashion).

Sample Conversation

Loving Inner Parent (LIP): So you're feeling afraid.

Inner Child (IC): Yes.

LIP: Is there anything that happened in the last little bit that cause you to feel that way?

IC: Yah, Mr. Brown looked at us in a mean way.

LIP: I can see how that'd make you feel afraid. If it's okay to ask, what does this remind you of from the past?

IC: It reminds me of when Dad would look at us in a mean way. It was so scary.

LIP: Thank you for sharing that . Why was it so scary?

ICL : Because he'd hit us then.

(Return to regular Acknowledgement—Normalization—Compassionate Support Method)

Communication Method Three: Ongoing Parts Conversation About Higher Power

This process can take many forms. Three common forms include using sanities lists for each part to help that part discover the nature of it's Higher Power. It can also involve ongoing dialogues about parts' needs, hopes and dreams. It can also include talking with parts/being curious when they don't reach out for support.

An Exercise in Manifesting

1. Select a situation, current difficulty or trigger that raises fear, shame or abandonment. Jot down a few key words to identify that situation.
2. Take a moment to review your Higher Power Qualities List in order to remember what you're trying to bring to this current difficulty in terms of self-support. Jot down 3 or 4 of the most important qualities.
3. Select 2 aspects of self to work with: the part that feels the difficult feeling and the part that wants to push away the difficult feeling. Using some of the communication methods we've just discussed, please carry on a conversation with each part in written form. When you are done with the conversation, thank that part for talking with you and let him/her know you appreciate him/her.

Exile/Victim/Challenged/Repressed Part Conversation:

Manager/Firefighter/Part that Wants to Suppress the Exile's Responses Conversation:

Questions for Further Discussion & Reflection:

- What was the experience like for you, your part that carried the emotional load and the part of you that wants to suppress the feeling?
- What challenges did you experience in the conversation process?
- What felt good and bad about the conversation process?
- What do you want to remember or take away from this exercise into your recovery?