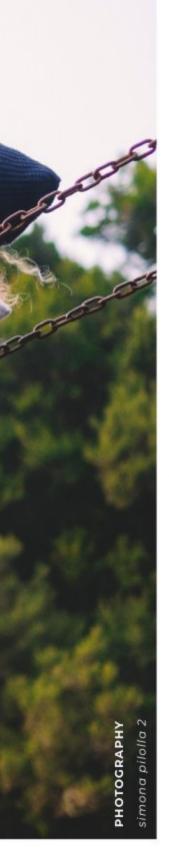# spiritual shackles

WHEN OUR INNER CHILD SPEAKS

BY PETER GRADILONE, MAT LMSW

To release that which does not serve our well-being is an essential part of the process of growing into true emotional and psychological adulthood.

That said an individual must first struggle through the path of adulthood before one can truly claim access to the inner child. To not do so only leads to childish behavior, not inner child wonder. Childishness has little or no discipline. The inner child has both wonder and discipline. Childishness cannot regulate. The inner child can.

A formative example of this inner child process is illustrated by the renowned philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. He proposed that there are three developmental stages in life.

The first is that of the camel. The camel being a beast of burden must tolerate the weight of that which is placed upon his or her back. Likewise, we are weighed down by the demands of society; our family, religion, job or career, peer group, culture. In short, anyone who has a plan for us regardless of our nature.

The second stage is that of the lion. Here is where we throw off the bounds and perhaps say "no," or at least, "I'd rather." It is the time of the lion's roar (The Lion roar of the Buddha time). If we succeed in getting this far, we can then access the inner child, who has most likely been asleep since our actual childhood. Here we see everything anew with our own eyes, like the eyes of a child's wonder, and not the eyes of the aforementioned camel, burdened with everyone else's idea of who we should be. A religious example would be the proclamation of Jesus of Nazareth, "You must be as a child to enter the kingdom of heaven."

The only con to this process is the risk of self-delusion. The inner child is not so easily won. It often takes mentorship of some kind, such as therapy. The con is if one does not seek this path, one falls back into the same old, same old, with all the risks of psychological and spiritual atrophy.

Surrender to the inner child with care. MA

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