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Whose mind are *you* thinking with?  
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*"Man is made or unmade by himself. In the armory of thought he forges the weapons by which he destroys himself. He also fashions the tools with which he builds for himself heavenly mansions of joy and strength and peace."* - James Allen

Developmental psychologists tell us children, progressing through various stages from prenatal to age about nine, discover (mentally, emotionally, physically, spiritually and psychologically - depending on the stage they're in) (1) whether or not it's safe him/her to be here; (2) whether or not it's ok to make his/her needs known; (3) whether or not it's safe for him/her to explore and try new things; (4) whether or not to trust what he/she is learning; (5) whether it's ok to learn to think for one's self; (6) whether or not it's ok for him/her to be "who I am," to find out who others are and to learn the consequences for his/her behavior; and (7) how to build an internal structure that supports him/her, and to develop the competence to master the technical and social skills needed to live in his/her culture.

Our psychological and emotional orientation to our world is pretty much in place by the time we are nine or ten. Many psychologists say - our emotional and psychological make-up is set by the time we are six.

Consider:

As an "adult," the question is: "When I'm thinking, responding and reacting to my life, who is it who's thinking and reacting?"

There are two choices: (1) my 3-4-5-6 child-ish self or (2) my emotionally and spiritually mature self.

The answer for 98% percent of the population (though they may disagree) is (1).

Generally, developmental psychologists largely agree that most "adults" - emotionally - are actually 3-4-5-6-year-olds, in adult bodies, wearing adult clothes and that while people, places, events and circumstances change from age six well through adulthood, our psychological and emotional orientation and reaction to them is still that of a 3-4-5-6-year-old.

Whose mind is it anyway?

Let's use the metaphor of a motherboard, or a systems board - the piece of electronic equipment that "thinks" or "drives" the behavior of a computer or electronic device and let's allow this motherboard to represent our brain or mind.

A motherboard is not flat nor smooth; rather, items are attached to it - nodes, diodes, small metal, plastic or rubber-wrapped items. These various structures contain all the programming and commands that allow the computer or electronic device to function - i.e., *think* and *react*.

During the stages between pre-birth to about the age of six, we take on our "programming" - e.g., our emotions, feelings, ways of believing about, thinking about, and reacting to our world and the people in it, ways of negotiating our world that kept us safe and secure, ways or behaving that brought us love, acceptance and approval from our primary caregivers and other authority figures (e.g., extended family and friends, teachers, clergy and the like).

So, now as an "adult," you - i.e., your motherboard - possesses a database of thoughts, beliefs, behaviors, emotions, feelings, worldviews, assumptions, perceptions, understandings, expectations, inferences, biases and values - of a young child.

Is it your adult "you," or your little boy or girl?

The next time you become reactive (i.e., fearful, angry, rageful, jealous, resentful, confused, lost, apprehensive and the like) about some aspect of your life – at work, at home, at play or in relationship – ask yourself these questions:

*What am I feeling right now?*

*How old do I feel (emotionally, not chronologically)?*

The *emotionally immature* adult thinks and reacts with the mind of the 3-4-5-6-year-old. The emotionally immature, *child-ish*, adult often is experienced as: acting out, throwing tantrums, being overbearing, micromanaging, fearful, scared, needy, controlling, disrespectful, angry, resentful, pushy, bullying, judgmental, critical, jealous, envious, abusive, shut down, withdrawn, dishonest, insincere, defensive, argumentative, grandiose, and focused on the self and ego.

How does this happen?

When we experience consistently loving, caring, and nurturing parents, we are more likely to create strong, positive ways of doing and being in the world. Such *consistent* behavior comes from few dedicated, focused, mature, healthy parents whose parenting efforts were continuous. Few folks were raised in such families. Few of us had our needs met adequately. The result is that uneven parenting produces children who were neglected – physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually and/or psychologically. Many children were not raised to develop strong centers – the result is some flavor of emotional immaturity or child-ish-ness.

Child-like behavior - Growing up again

For most folks, the path from child-ish-ness to emotional and spiritual maturity – becoming an "adult" adult - requires some type of process – i.e., developmental "work" - which support us to "grow up again." This process (it is a process, *not an event*) supports one to come into their own True, Real and Authentic Self in their life - at work, at home, at play and in relationship. The process of growing up again supports one to access their True and Real Self – the Self that was ignored during childhood.

What does a mature, child-like adult look like?

*Presence* work for the adult usually focuses on awareness of our past programming and how it adversely affects our present state. *Presence* work also teaches us to be with what is, right here and right now – "my self" in the moment unencumbered by past emotional and mental baggage we have carried through life. *Presence* work also focuses on the heart – where our True and Real Self abides. The idea is to be in the moment, not in the past – and walk through life with a smooth, clean motherboard.

Eckert Tolle in his work around *presence (the Now)*, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi in his work around *flow*, Buddhist practices around meditation and achieving a state of "no mind," or other spiritual traditions that focus on a *still point*, are meant to support us to experience life right here and right now from a place where we are real and authentic in the moment – unencumbered by "our motherboard" – past programming.

From a place of *presence*, no one owns any real estate on your motherboard. It's smooth and flat. In fact, we don't really need a motherboard because our heart and soul are driving. We are connected to our True Self - a singular node or diode - our Center or Core - our True and Real "ME!" that informs us of "right knowing," "right understanding" and "right action" – all from the "inside."

*Presence* draws on our heart and soul's capacities, allowing us to experience true emotional and spiritual maturity and a "child-like" (vs. child-ish) state.

Presence deletes our "little child" programming – which often creates states of feeling: lost, angry, abandoned, confused, unloved, etc. In a state of presence, we access "no mind" - what our heart and soul give us in this moment. Presence results in a True and Authentic Self who is: loving, compassionate lively, nurturing, excited, firm, fair, helpful, juicy, respectful, adventurous, self-responsible, curious, non-judgmental, wondering, joyful, honest, sincere, happy, allowing and accepting.

So, the next time you're feeling reactive, consider what it would be like if you didn't react with that little boy or girls' mind. Hmmm.

**So, some questions for self-reflection are:**

- What are some of your strongest beliefs about money, career, friends, family, appearance, health, and relationships? Are these *your* beliefs? Do they help you experience fulfillment and well-being?
- Are you open to viewpoints different from yours?
- When your internal judge and critic judges you harshly, whose voice do you most often hear (primary caregiver, other)?
- Were you encouraged to be curious, "think for yourself," be spontaneous and display your emotions (whatever they were, but knowing there would be consequences for acting out) as a child?

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