

Are you digging yourself into a hole?

In the areas of developmental psychology, spiritual psychology and related fields, there's a given understanding that most of us, simply by nature of being born and raised in this world is "hurt" or "wounded" in the process. Even though our parents or primary caregivers are doing their utmost to raise us well, nurture us and socialize us, the fact is most everyone's care giving comes up short - even in those homes where folks say their childhood was "the best", or completely stable. "Wounding" is a fact of life of the human condition for most of us. This wounding can be mental, emotional, psychological, physical and/or spiritual.

One reason we come into this journey on the planet, and especially in our journey in our various relationships, is to "heal" this hurt so we can grow emotionally and spiritually into mature and competent adults and, as mature adults, show up in our life at work, at home, at play and in relationship authentically and emotionally conscious, healthy, alert and alive - i.e., whole.

One manifestation of this hurt or wounding is that, if asked and answered honestly, every human being will admit to feeling some degree of "deficiency", or "lack", in some way at some time.

Individuals who have done or are doing "personal work" or "spiritual developmental work" will most readily admit to experiencing this feeling of deficiency. Those who are on the other end of the spectrum may engage in denial, resistance, or just out-and-out- rejection of the notion they are somehow not "all that I can be", right here and right now, and say they never feel lacking or deficient - a defensive, reactive response for many.

One of the feelings associated with this "hurt" is that often folks may feel "empty", "worthless" or "valueless" in some way - perhaps in some aspect of their work life, play life, home life or relationship life. They don't feel they are all they can be and often experience feelings of confusion, frustration, fear, resentment, guilt or shame about who they are and how they feel about themselves.

This feeling of being "less than", or "not enough" is often referred to as a "hole" and so when in a state where they may be experiencing their hole, people might feel a wave or cloud coming over them where they feel they lack value, or worth, or feel "empty". Often folks fail to show up authentically as they consciously or unconsciously allow their feelings of "deficiency" to drive who they are and show up as phonies, frauds, fakes, bullies, or fearful, quiet, submissive, deferential, etc. on some level. The "hole" is a natural and necessary state and can promote conscious and healthy emotional and spiritual growth if dealt with consciously and honestly.

So, what's the point?

The point is that the hole of deficiency can be filled. The question is how one chooses to fill the hole. The degree to which one experiences true and real inner peace, happiness, harmony and relaxation in their life (at work, at home, at play and in relationship) is a function of how one chooses to fill their hole.

There are two methods for "hole filling" - from "without" or from "within". The former results in digging a deeper hole; the latter results in reducing the size of the hole, perhaps eliminating it altogether.

From without

When folks attempt to fill their hole, their feelings of deficiency, of not being "enough" from "without" they tend to look outside themselves for a "quick-fix" that will bring a short-term feeling of OK-ness. Some of these folks will effort to inflate who they are in order to fill their hole of emptiness while others deal with the emptiness most often by filling it with stuff, stuff and more stuff.

Many of these folks who don't feel safe or comfortable in their own skins continually live life seeking recognition, approval, and emotional and psychological security through vain actions and activities - wanting and needing others to give them a sense of OK-ness.

The downside of filling the hole from "without" is the hole never is filled but the intensity and degree of the activities they engage in to fill their hole become more and more progressive (like needing more and more of a drug to gain the same "numbing" effect). Living a life filling a hole from the "outside" results in a life characterized by an insidious sense of toxicity, intensity, agitation, and feelings of envy, jealousy, anger, shame, guilt, sadness, depression, despair, etc. on some level. Hole-filling for them is a never-ending battle, exhausting on every level - mental, physical, spiritual, emotional, social - as their hole grows deeper and deeper and their need for approval grows.

The narcissist is one example of an individual who tends to fill their hole from the outside - with their incessant need for admiration, approval, acknowledgement and recognition.

The narcissist lives from a perspective of needing to always "stand out", to be seen and be "somebody" (as "inside" they feel deficient). So, in their life at work, at home, at play and in relationship, filling their hole of deficiency drives them to be the center of the Universe, living a life characterized by vanity, arrogance, lack of humility and egocentricity. The result, however, is digging one's self into an ever deepening hole that requires more and more filling.

The tools and practices for filling the hole from without are those that anaesthetize one to their feelings - numbing out, denying and withdrawing - through TV, entertainment, sports, sex, alcohol, chemical and non-chemical medications, exercise, shopping, eating, and gathering stuff, or activities that require always being "on", e.g., the life of the party, the know-it-all, the expert, always being "out there" in an effort to be seen, heard and acknowledged and "doing, doing, doing", i.e., keeping busy.

From within

Filling the hole from within requires pursuing a conscious and honest exploration of one's sense of deficiency, knowing that their feelings of lack and deficiency are not "their fault". In the process, they move to an inner place of peace, understanding, strength, will, courage and compassion which support one to take the necessary actions to allow their hole, to be OK with it and in that very process - allowing me to be me just as I am - experience the hole reduce and resolve.

Exploring from this inner place, one acquires insights, and awareness of the tools and practices that support one to understand the nature of "holes" and to forward the action of their life by doing the "quiet", deep developmental work that supports their growth process. As part of this process, these folks are guided, internally and insightfully, to master the knowledge, tools and skills that support their self-actualization in their life at work, at home, at play and in relationship, a life they live with authenticity, sincerity, self-trust, honesty and self-responsibility. From this place of acceptance of the hole, understanding how the

hole supports us to grow and mature, the hole begins to fill itself. The work of filling the hole from within is quiet, deep, personal, inward directed and outwardly manifested.

The tools and practices used to fill the hole from "within" are journaling, self-reflection, meditation, silence, inquiry or deep questioning about "Who am I" and "What am I?", listening for an inner voice to inform us and often working in dialogue with a support person (e.g., a spiritual coach, counselor, clergy person, a capable and trusted friend, partner, etc.) who can guide them on their inner journey. From within, the more one's hole is reduced, the more one's heart-felt inner strength, trust and courage arise to allow one to "be myself" – without needing any false or phony packaging or shoring up.

In the process of filling the hole from within, folks are able to acknowledge, observe and be curious about (without judgment!) their feelings of inadequacy and deficiency, accept them, learn from them and then move to a place of inner fortitude and steadfastness where they gain an inner, deeper, true sense of their value and worth and the capacity to show up more authentically - not needing to put on the cloak of a "false self" in order to be "somebody" other than who they really are.

What we resist, persists. When we resist the hole and look to fill it from the outside, the hole will persist, and grow deeper.

When we do deeper inner work and allow the feelings connected to the hole, and work with these feelings, the hole will begin to dissipate and dissolve.

The bottom-line question is, "How do I choose to show up in my life at work, at home, at play and in relationship?" Authentically, or not? Life is choices.

This choice will result in reducing and eliminating the hole - or digging a deeper one.

So, some questions for self-reflection are:

- In what ways do I often feel I am "not enough", deficient or lacking or "empty"? Why do I think I feel the way I do? How do I feel about feeling the way I do?
- Do I engage in "outside" activities to an extreme to feel secure, engaged and have some sense of OK-ness with my life? If so, what does all this activity get me?
- Do I feel and show up authentically at work, at home, at play, in my relationships? Really, authentic? Do I ever feel like a fake or a phony? Do I ever consciously choose to be a fake or phony? If so, why?
- Do I often find myself rationalizing my behaviors?
- Do I often feel a need to be "out there" - the life of the party, the "know-it-all", the expert, etc?
- Do I play "small", feel unseen and invisible much of the time? Do I often feel I am "not enough" in some way? If so, do I know why?
- Do I have a "spiritual" (here, not theological, or religious) life? Do I meditate, write poetry, walk in nature, sing, dance, paint, journal, self-reflect...as a way to experience quiet, silence, inner peace, and personal discovery?
- Who in my life pushes my buttons? What do I see about my reactivity (not about *them*) that points to an area or areas in *me* where I might be in denial or have possible blind spots where I need to do some deeper exploration?
- What one or two baby steps can I take in the next week or two to move toward exploring my feelings around lack or deficiency?

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