

as i sit and write this, i realize what a task it could be. my intention is to tell you about myself and **the** way I am, **the** way I AM but that's not so easy to convey in words for those of you that don't really know me. what i can do is give you a general overview of my life, the people who raised me, friends from the past, and who i am now. it's difficult to document every detail of a person's life, so this is the best that i can do for now, but hopefully we'll get to know each other better, and in turn this will lead to a more open relationship between myself and the world.



it was late in the summer of '95 when i started to notice a serious conflict in my head between my conscious and unconscious thinking. i would do things, just everyday things, and they would come out differently than the way i thought they should be done. you see- my instincts would act, and completely override my conscious thinking, causing me to do things that i would regret. time and time again i would act without thinking, only to apologize later when i had thought my actions through. in the fall i took a trip back to my hometown to stay with my grandparents for a week. during that week i noticed that a lot of the way my grandpa acted towards my grandma directly mirrored the way i acted towards my close friends, and also the way i acted to close friends in the past. this scared me, i was seeing everything i had seen growing up, for as long as i could remember, but it was in a different light now. instead of seeing this abuse through a 5 year old's eyes, i was seeing it through my 20 year old eyes, and starting to make a lot of connections between the conflict in my head and the cause of it all. i started thinking everything through, i read books, i wrote it all down, and i sat and thought a lot...



i thought about all of the people that had any sort of impact on me when i was a child. my parents, my grandparents, my teachers, even my friends. i thought about all of the examples i followed from my grandpa, and my dad. when i was little i would look to *male* role models for examples because i was a little *Boy*. all that i could do when i was little was look for examples, i didn't know how to talk and couldn't understand what was said to me, so i learned by watching. when i grew older, i would pay attention most to the person who paid me the most attention. in this case it was mostly my grandpa, and sometimes my grandma. by age 4 or 5 my grandpa had become my best friend. he had a huge impact on me, and i now see a lot of him in myself.

these excerpts are part of a letter that i recently wrote to my grandpa:

"... i remember sitting at the kitchen table last october watching you act towards grandma the way you have for years, and i remember being disgusted by it. i also remember when i was 8 years old, i used to sit in the same chair and laugh at the same behavior, but last october was different, i wasn't 8 years old anymore, i was 20. i was (and am) able to tell between right and wrong.

i think the way you act towards grandma is wrong, you're flat out abusive. but, when i was 8, i was so impressionable. i also remember grandma telling me that the way you acted was wrong, but it went in one ear and out the other, because my eyes were fixed on you. you see when i was 8 i was a little boy and little <sup>Boys</sup> look up to <sup>Boys</sup> MEN as their role models, not women. so, no matter what grandma told me, i would still look to you for guidance because when you're young it's what you **see** as an example rather than what you hear being said to you, because that's how young minds work..."

"... i think that you were the biggest influence on me up until age 12 when i moved away. i see a lot of you in myself at times, and at times i get frustrated because i disagree with some of the influence that you had on me. probably the most major thing is how you acted towards grandma. i'm really not sure why you act this way, but at times i see it in the way i act towards people."



"... other things are - the way you stuff away your feelings and emotions. this is something i see in myself and in my dad. all throughout my childhood i would see you express what you thought or what you knew about so many different things. but when it came to share how you <sup>felt</sup> about things you became quiet. this may have led to your poor intimacy quality, and possibly why you and grandma were arguing. which led to bad relationship qualities. it seems as though you would hold all of your feelings and emotions inside of you for so long - they would all come out as abuse towards the only one around to take it - grandma. and i watched you act this way for years and years. and looking back i can see myself acting exactly the same ~~the~~ way. and it's been so frustrating because i do NOT agree with a lot of the ways i was taught to act."



when i was young i would visit my grandparents' house a couple of times a week. the time that i spent with them was very quality time. they paid a lot of attention to me, and in return, i paid them a lot of attention. i remember sitting in their kitchen at the table and watching my grandpa verbally abuse my grandma over and over again. nothing she did was 'right' in his eyes. he would criticize <sup>everything</sup> that she did or said and i sat there wide eyed, taking it all in, thinking that this is what happens when two people are in love, and spend their lives together. now, i think the cause of grandpa's actions was something deeper. grandma was always open and talkative with me about her feelings, but i thought this was wierd back then because grandpa was very closed with his feelings. back then i looked up to grandpa, not grandma. if i only knew then what i know now. i think that grandpa had so much built up inside of him it constantly fueled his abuse towards grandma. i watched and learned how to act this out




to a tee for 12 years until i moved away from grandpa after that things were never quite the same between us. we not only were physically distanced, but our friendship wasn't the same either.

it wasn't until last fall when i was visiting them sitting at that same kitchen table when things started to really click in my head about why i was sometimes abusive, and what was causing it was how closed i was with my feelings and emotions, and how dishonest i was with myself by denying myself the right to feel whatever i was feeling. but this realization was only the beginning...

these are excerpts from a similar letter that i wrote to my grandma:

"... i also remember last october, sitting at the kitchen table well aware that i disagreed with grandpa's behavior, but something new came up - you and grandpa were having one of your many daily arguments, i don't remember what about, but you asked me to basically be the mediator, and i remember flat out saying - no, that if you had an argument with grandpa, that you should deal with it.



i then walked off and returned 15 minutes later, and you said 'Matthew, you're right, you shouldn't have to speak for me.' i will never forget that as long as i live, this triggered something in me, and i recall when i was 7 having to be the mediator between you and grandpa, looking back i think 'What a waste of time!' i spent so much time as a kid dealing with your unresolved problems that i didn't have much time to just be me."

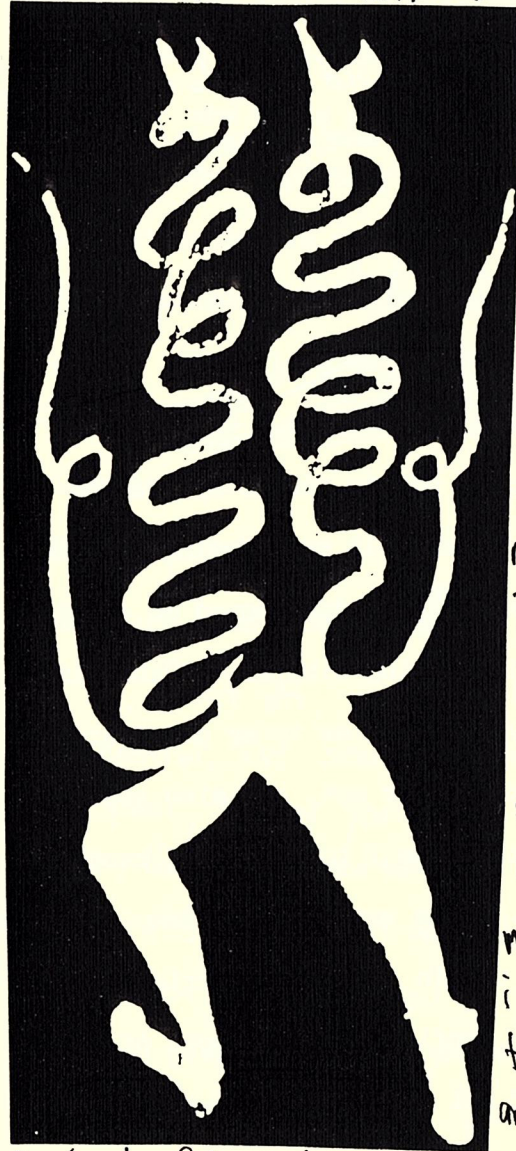


"... other conflicts i see in myself that i think i got from you is to be manipulative, this may be hard for you to accept, but it is something i saw in you long before i saw it in myself. i felt like you were always pressuring me very subtly to be the way you thought was best as opposed to what i wanted to do. the biggest example (and still prevalent) is the school issue. all i would ever hear from you is how important school was (is).

and i would respond that <sup>I</sup> didn't } WANT  
to go to school. so you would coax me with  
things. such as a place to live, free food if i went  
to school. i'd just like to say that this was  
an added stress that i did (do) not need. there are  
other things that make me feel like you are a bit sneaky  
and manipulative. i really have no appreciation for it  
at all, and it is still a struggle everytime, find  
myself following this bad example of how to deal  
with people."

"...other things include your bad relationship with  
grandpa, if you were in love with each other and  
married, why was there always such a tension?  
this has come out in me in the way that i have  
relationships with people. you showed me that being  
in love meant compromising yourself to the point of  
unhappiness, that it meant putting up with abusive  
behavior (to be silent is to condone) i rarely saw you  
stand up to grandpa's abusive behavior, you would always  
tell me how bad it was, but rarely tell him that  
you didn't like it. maybe if you would have told him,  
you never would have had to tell me."

"...other things include - attention, you always showed  
me attention, <sup>always</sup>, in fact so much so i came to  
just expect attention. sometimes i find myself  
needing attention.

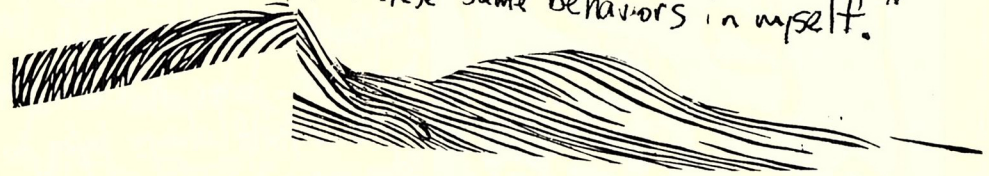


When i was young i got  
all the attention i needed,  
and a lot of time i was  
paid attention to be the  
mediator. later in life i  
found myself always trying to  
solve everyone's problems,  
usually feeling that there was  
no way to solve another  
person's problems. have  
you ever heard the old  
adage "you can't change  
other people, you can only  
change yourself." this really  
makes sense to me. when  
i was young i was always  
taught to be the mediator  
and help solve problems,  
instead of just being able to be myself."

"...other things include what i call "shit talking".

Shit talking is defined as "when you have something to say to someone, but instead say it to someone else about that someone" it's also known as "talking behind other people's backs" you showed this to me most vividly when you would complain to me of grandpa's behavior, but would rarely complain to the source of the behavior."

"... i've seen all of these same behaviors in myself."



now i realize that during my weekly visits my grandma had a lot of effect on who i was when i was growing up, and the combination of grandma **and** grandpa showed me a lot of bad examples i find myself dealing with all of the time. when i was 7 i had a very inside view to my grandparents' marriage, whether i wanted it or not, and also whether i realized it or not. at the time i found myself caught in the middle of everything. this was my main example of how to act when you're grown up, in love, and married. these examples have caused many conflicts with people of past relationships. on top of all of that, i was shown the example of how to manipulate people to get what you want. which isn't so much of a problem for me anymore, but every now and then, i catch myself and have to

consciously correct myself. overall i learned a lot of strange things from my grandma and grandpa. but since i wrote this letter to my grandma, we have talked on the phone, and i feel like as an outcome we have become a lot closer. she tells me that she treasures my letter and understands completely why i wrote it which has been so supportive and is exactly the response, if any, i hoped for. overall my grandma and grandpa are really amazing people that raised me to be a generally good person with some strange quirks, but i guess those quirks are inevitable because people are different, what matters, however, is how we all deal with our quirks.

here are some excerpts from a letter to my dad:

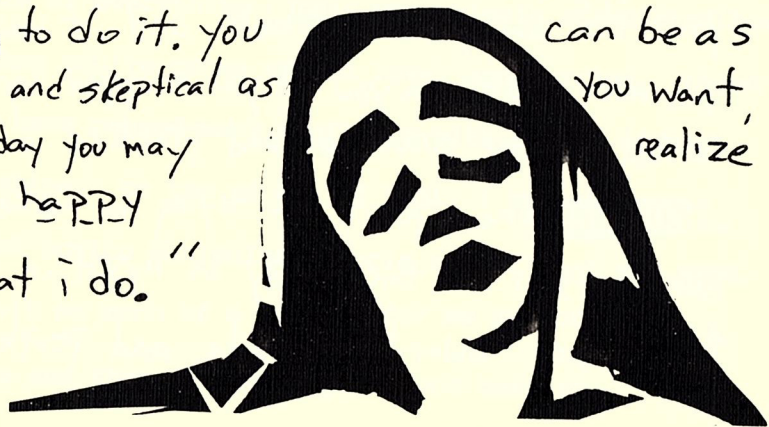
"... first off, you seem like you always need to be in control, i've seen this trait many, many times in the past, the way you used to treat me when i lived with you, the way you used to treat mom when she lived with you. it's simply not acceptable and it would probably be much easier on you if you stopped trying to control everyone around you and practice a little self-**CONTROL** the point i'm trying to make is that sometimes i see this quality in myself in the way that i act towards friends and people in close to.



i'm sure this is something i picked up from your example when i was young. other qualities i picked up from your examples that i see in myself are - your poor listening qualities, this goes with the fact that when you used to have conversations with me when i lived with you, you would talk AT me instead of to me. what i mean is that you would say what you had to say and think that was all that needed to be said, not wait for a response or the other person's opinion. you used to do this to me all the time when i lived with you and still do it sometimes now that i don't.

this character trait of yours leads me to realize your untrusting and skeptical nature. ~~Whenever~~ Whenever i would tell you about something i wanted to do, you would rarely support me and just trust my judgement, and you still do it. Well, i'm telling you (as if you haven't realized this by now) if there is something i want to do, and i have the means to do it,

i am going to do it. you untrusting and skeptical as but someday you may that - i'm happy doing what i do. "



can be a s  
you want,  
realize

"... other things i realize that we have in common is that we both stuff our emotions away. i got this from you when i was young, and you got it from grandpa when you were young. i stuff away how i feel about things, and they build and build inside of me until i realize how stressful that is, and let it all out at once."

my dad and grandpa are very similar in a lot of respects.

i picked up on some of the same examples from both of them.

i realize now what an impact my dad's examples had on me.

i lived with him until i was 15. the first 12 years in the same town as my grandparents. so the attention mostly came from them, but after we moved i turned to my dad for most

of my attention. i remember my dad always being the

skeptic and when we would have conversations, they were

often very one sided. it didn't take me long to learn to

just not respond when my dad would talk at me. but, some-

how, somewhere along the line i picked up on his examples,

and even though i hated it then when he would act this way,

i catch myself ~~acting~~ acting the same way now, and it gets

frustrating at times. my dad is very much the same now

as he was when i was growing up, and i see him in myself

a lot, some of it good, some of it bad, but overall my dad

is a very reasonable person, and his response to my letter

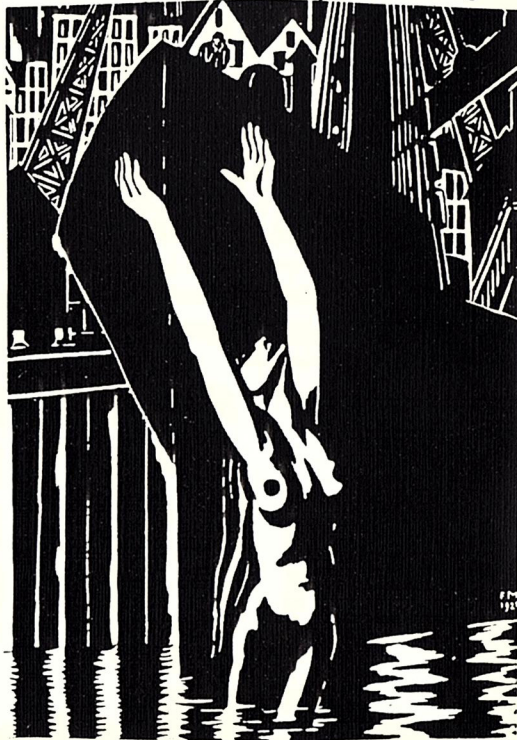
was very positive and understanding. i like my dad, but x

there are those times when i catch myself repeating his

bad examples that i realize that i dislike some of the impact that he had on me.

...and here are some excerpts from a letter to my mom:

"... you and dad seemed to have an odd marriage. looking back, i see that you were not so happy with the way things were, and it probably started before i was born, but from what i do remember you seemed insecure and dissatisfied in general. i think some of your insecurity and dissatisfaction rubbed off on me. that and, your bad relationship with dad made me feel a little bit uncomfortable at home, even from a very early age. i think that it all progressed until neither one of us wanted to be in that situation. so you left. then dad looked to me to take your place with cleaning, cooking, looking after my brothers, and it made me feel like leaving - so i left."



11... i've learned a lot from those mistakes that you and dad had with each other. sometimes i see these being played out in the way i relate to my friends. but i'm learning to catch myself, not be so insecure, and to stay out of dissatisfying situations."

i remember growing up with my mom very ~~we~~ well. from a very young age i began picking up on my mom's insecurities. she was the first human i made contact with, she was the first one to affect me, and from the moment of birth i began to sense my mom's examples, those of insecurity and unassertiveness were my first instincts, and they are the examples that i have followed the longest and they are the hardest to unlearn, but i **am** learning to catch myself.

the following letter is a different type of letter that i wrote to friend that i had a very close relationship with for over a year and a half. during that time, i saw ~~all~~ all of the qualities i was taught, and then some, come out in the way i acted. in a lot of ways it's sad that i couldn't figure myself out earlier, but some things you can only realize through experience.

"... looking back over the past two years i see so much, i see many ways that i've grown, people i've met, things i've done etc... i can also see the time that we spent together more clearly, i can see that i caused you much stress and grief, and i'd like to apologize for anything mean or abusive that i did to you. i'm sorry. i'd also like to apologize for the nite that i hit you. i'm very sorry. i'm sorry i wasn't able to just walk away from the situation and just let it be. i'm sorry i let things escalate to to point of physical abuse. i'm sorry there was any sort of abuse period in our relationship. i honestly hope that you can forgive me."



looking back over the past two years it's easy to see the reasoning behind my actions and thoughts. i see a part of ~~my~~ each of my family in myself. this hasn't been about finding an excuse for my action. in some ~~aa~~ cases there is not any excuse. what it has been about is me finding the reason behind why i am the way i am. when i found that, i found the means of change for my desired end.

...and here is a journal entry i wrote to myself:

"... i've discovered that communication is key, and to communicate properly, one has to be open and honest and assertive about one's feelings. i've also noticed that i've been in this transition period for about a year now, and i've had regressions, and i've also made much; much progress. i make progress when i keep on top of myself, always questioning. i slip when i don't consciously think about what i'm doing. this transition may very well be a lifelong process, that will go smoothly as long as i keep on top of myself, and communicate my thoughts and feelings openly and freely."

in closing, here is a letter from me to you direct:

Dear Reader,

in a way this whole magazine has been one big letter to you. a letter of explanation into why i am the way i am. as a whole it may be a very non-specific way of presenting myself to you, but if you look at and read everything carefully you will see a pretty clear and vivid picture of me. so, read again, pay attention to detail, and then if ~~things~~ things are unclear, or you have any questions what-so-ever about why i am the way i am, please, just ask me.

Love,

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