



Putting Your Best Self Forward: How Your Parents Influence Your Success

Early last year, my friend Julia was headed to a business meeting. As she entered the door to the conference room where the meeting would be held, she noticed that her secretary Rachel had not provided the room with all the equipment she needed for her presentation. Without thinking, she blew up at her secretary in front of everyone in the meeting. Later, facing a tearful Rachel, she felt ashamed by the outburst, but she could not pinpoint why she had reacted so violently.

Like Julia, we may occasionally become perplexed by the automatic ways we react to life situations and wish in retrospect that we had responded differently than we did. However, these automatic reactions that trouble us have been imprinted as neural pathways in our brains since childhood. Image Psychology research in the last half century has shown that our mother's and father's influence is wired into our brains and color our automatic knee jerk reactions to life. We may ponder why we react with particular habitual responses, such as fear or anger or dread, perhaps thinking they are due to some mysterious defect within us. In fact,

most of the attitudes and emotions we spontaneously experience are the result of imprints stored in our brains from our early experience with our parents or primary caretakers.

Our childhood experiences determine not just our present and future emotional life, but also our physiology. NIH scientists Dorothy Lewis and Jonathan Pincus studied the effect of childhood abuse and neglect on the brain. They discovered that a person's early relationship with his or her parents altered the size, shape, and chemical functions of the brain. This is a profound discovery because it reveals the deep impact of our developmental relationship with our parents in shaping the actual physical formation of our brain and its chemical functions. Thus, Pincus and Lewis discovered that our environment is so powerful that it can override our inherent genetic tendencies and shape how our brains function, impacting our perceptions, emotions, abilities, ways of reacting and how we experience life.

Think of the child of an athletic parent, who has the genetic capacity to excel, yet is critiqued by his father every time he throws a baseball. Absorbing his father's criti-

cisms, the child ends up afraid of making a mistake and begins to lack confidence in his natural ability to throw the ball. Although he may be genetically gifted by nature, the child's delivery is now thwarted. The criticism of his father becomes imprinted in his brain in the form of a mental image, which not only impacts his ability to pitch the ball, but also hurts his confidence in general. As an adult, he may forget the youthful incidents of criticism from his father. Yet his brain remembers. Now, he finds that every time he has to prove himself, such as delivering a presentation at work, the negative image of his father is activated within him, igniting a neural signal that triggers the old familiar sense of self-doubt. On the other hand, a child who is given encouraging messages and positive feedback will trust his natural abilities in life and flourish.

We can gain profound insight into the automatic ways in which we react to the events in our life through utilizing the tools of Eidetic Image Psychology, which studies the images stored in our mind of our life experience. This allows us to consciously choose how we want to respond to life situations in order to create more positive outcomes. We do not have to be slaves to the unknown negative wiring of our pasts. We can consciously choose to bring forward more positive responses from the storehouse of images within us. Eidetic Imagery research has found that beneath the powerful socially conditioned layer of our historical influences, there resides a level of wholeness, where we are replete with natural potentials. Untainted by history, our original nature still remains, encoded within us. It can be brought to the fore so that the most beneficial outcomes for both, ourselves and others can occur.

An Eidetic Image is a bright, lively picture seen in the mind, much like a movie image or a filmstrip. It is different from other types of mental images in its unusual clarity and its ability to reproduce important life events with exact detail. These special images are neurologically recorded in the brain and systematically stored away for future reference. They contain information about our genetic wholeness, as well as the impact of our personal history upon it. The subject of much clinical research and study, Eidetic Images provide a great deal of information about our present abilities, potentials, behaviors and ways of acting in the world.

Crossing the Road Exercise:

Here is an Eidetic Imagery exercise that can help you become more aware of your conditioned reactions to many life-situations based on the influence of your parents.

With your eyes open or closed, take a moment to allow the following images to form in your mind's eye as you follow the instructions. In seeing these images, let the information they convey unfold and become clear to you.

1. See that you cross a road to get to a shop that you often frequent on the other side of the road.
2. Notice how you cross the road. Are you hurried, careful, joyful, or at ease?

3. Now keep your mother in mind and see that you cross the road to reach shop on the other side. Your mother should not appear in the image. Just think of her as you see yourself crossing the road. Let the image unfold in its own manner.

4. Do you cross the road differently with mother in mind than when you crossed by yourself? What is that difference?

5. Now keep your father in mind and see that you cross the road to reach the shop on the other side. Your father should not appear in the image. Just think of him as you see yourself crossing the road. Let the image unfold in its own manner.

6. Is there a difference in how you cross the road with father in mind than with mother in mind? What is the difference?

7. Which parent gives you more energy? Which parent is more obstructive?

What this imagery exercise reveals to you is that through keeping your different parents in mind, you can consciously see, viscerally experience, and ultimately understand how your habitual ways of responding to life situations is rooted in the relationship with each one of your parents.

You will notice that there is a difference in your feeling states in how you crossed the road with mother in mind than with father in mind. These responses are the automatic body-mind reactions that reveal the effect of your different parents upon your present psyche. This information, described in holographic pictures, has been neurologically imprinted within you and dictates many of your moods, behaviors, and reactions to the world. You may have noticed ease or tension in the images. Notice, which parent gave you more energy and ability or ease? Which parents made you feel more inhibited? With the knowledge of how these parental energies affect you, you can consciously use these parental images in other life situations.

You may find that one parent is negative and the other positive. Or, both can be negative, or both positive. The exact quality and tone of the positive or negative energy will emerge while doing the exercise and is a useful tool for mastering life experiences.

How does this help?

If, for example, you find one parent negative and the other positive while crossing the road, you can consciously alter your automatic responses by keeping the "positive" parent in mind as you do things in life. For example, the next time you are dealing with a difficult person, see an image of this person and keep the positive parent in mind. You will immediately notice your natural constructive abilities emerge in dealing with this person.

If both parents are positive, you can use the positive quality offered by each parent for different tasks. For example, one woman described that keeping her mother in mind gave her focusing ability, while keeping her father made her feel full of love. Each time that she had to focus on a work



task, she kept her mother in mind and found her ability to stay focused came easily. When she found herself getting into a power struggle with her children to clean up their rooms, keeping her father in mind, allowed her to feel love and communicate with them in a manner that effectively made the children want to cooperate with her.

If both parents are negative, it is useful to see how your parents affected you, so you can become conscious of your habitual negative or self-defeating behaviors that get in your way. In this situation, simply keep in mind a significant person in your life who positively affected you as you cross the road. You may use a mentor, a relative, a therapist, a spiritual teacher, or a religious figure such as Buddha, Jesus, Mary or whomever deeply moves you. Using them as a filter will bring out your best abilities to deal with the many vicissitudes of life.

Other exercises using our parents as filters:

Overcoming Problems Exercise:

1. See a problem or difficult situation or person in your minds eye.
2. What do you see? How do you feel as you see it?
3. Keep mother in mind and see the problem, person or situation.
4. What happens in the image-keeping mother in mind? Let the images unfold on their own.
5. Now, keep father in mind and see the problem, person, or situation.
6. What happens in the image-keeping father in mind?

Overcoming Obstructions Exercise:

1. See yourself dealing with an obstruction.
2. Keep mother in mind while you deal with the obstruction.
3. Keep father in mind while you deal with the obstruction.

4. Is there a difference in your feelings when you keep a different parent in mind?
5. See yourself working out details.
6. Keep mother in mind while you work out the details.
7. Keep father in mind while you work out the details.

Is there a difference in your feelings when you keep a different parent in mind?

8. See yourself implementing a solution.
9. Keep mother in mind while you implement the solution.
10. Keep father in mind while you implement the solution.
11. Is there a difference in your feelings when you keep a different parent in mind?

Applauded for Success Image:

1. See yourself being applauded for your achievement.
2. Keep mother in mind while you are being applauded for your achievement.
3. Keep father in mind while you are being applauded for your achievement.
4. Is there a difference in your feelings when you keep a different parent in mind?

Nancy had to give a presentation to her company's CEO. Wanting to bring her best potentials forward she did the imagery exercise in preparation:

"At first she saw herself giving the presentation and she felt scared and wanted to be approved of by the CEO. Keeping her mother in mind, as she saw herself presenting, her mother's fear came over her and felt herself tense up and hesitate as she spoke. Switching to keeping her father in mind, she remembered his pride in her accomplishments as a child. He always attended her school plays and soccer events taking great pride in her abilities. Thus, with him in mind, she was overcome with a sense of optimism and confidence. Her body stood taller and experienced a shift from wanting approval to feeling as if she had something important to say. Utilizing the gift of this awareness, Nancy kept her father in mind as she presented and found that she spoke with poise, authority and grace.

Armed with the tools of eidetic knowledge we can gain insight into the ways we have been conditioned by our upbringing, allowing us to heal unresolved areas and bring our best potentials forward. ■



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