

# Simmering Pot (Therapy 4)

Dale Easley's blog

5 March 2015

For the last two weeks, I've been using my therapy sessions to delve into a big trigger for me—religion. People acting religious has often led to some of my worst behavior, plus even if I behave, I get tense and often angry. However, I have several quite religious people in my life, and I don't want to let this part of me determine my reaction. I want to choose how I act, not act on impulse.

In the last blog entry, I talked about a part linked to The Explorer, the part of me that wants to look at new ideas, new places, new relationships. After asking the Explorer to step aside, I accessed a part I can best describe as a Simmering Pot. It had a thick, dark broth bubbling in it. Unlike my other parts, it didn't seem human. It was mute, a container. However, I learned that it could communicate with me by emotions and images. This Simmering Pot held intense memories. The therapy session was nearly over when I finally accessed it by taking a spoon and sipping the broth. (I probably got the idea from Dumbledore in Book 6.) The sip brought up an intensely pleasant memory from my high school days. I have often said that I miss the intensity of youth. This part has held onto those intense memories, preserving and protecting them. However, it has also held them out of my day-to-day thoughts to protect me.

During the second session when I attempted to access the Simmering Pot, I ran into another part closely linked to it, what I initially called the Anti-Religion part. My first spoonful of broth brought up a dark memory where I had behaved quite badly in response to an ongoing religious activity. I felt both angry and ashamed. However, as I explored this painful memory, my Anti-Religion part transformed into an Anti-Marginalization part. This may take a bit of explaining.

When I read through the Gospels about Jesus life, it seems pretty clear to me that he cared a lot more about those on the margins of society than those in power. He seemed concerned about rules mainly for making people's lives better, not for their own sake. However, my experience of Christianity has been more the opposite—it marginalizes people who don't fit a particular mold. The Gospel is turned on its head. Instead of reaching out to the outcasts, many Christian churches demonize them. Obviously, there are exceptions, like the Quakers. But some of my earliest experiences of church created in me a sense of being different, unaccepted, and certainly not unconditionally loved.

The positive part of feeling marginalized was that I have spent much of

my life pulling for others on the fringes. On the outside, I've been a pretty stereotypical successful white male—well-educated, middle class, homeowner, two kids, etc. But on the inside, I've usually felt alienated. Fortunately, I've often been in positions where I can use my own success to help others—volunteer GED teacher for math and science for 5 years with African-American women in New Orleans, multiple trips to Haiti to work on water wells, and now a science teacher at the University of Dubuque, where we intentionally recruit from underserved and first-generation populations. One of the things I've been happiest about for the last two years is making free coffee for students every Friday at 11:00am. I want to build a better sense of community. I doubt that would matter as much to me if I didn't struggle myself to feel part of a community. As I've been going through therapy, one of the things I've appreciated most is how in nearly every session, some part of myself that I initially see as a problem has become, by the end of the session, a friend, a part I'm proud of. I'm glad to have an Anti-Marginalization part and others, even Dick Cheney. I suppose these parts themselves want to be a community, to be welcomed, embraced, loved unconditionally, and not judged harshly. They want to be listened to. Only if they are ignored do they start to act up, to try to take over. Perhaps the building of community within myself is a model for building community within my world.