

What Do You Mean Only Love or Fear?

I find a lot of resistant to the concept of love and fear being the two primary emotions. We can resist that information in our brains but that is only the first step. Understanding this concept is a process. It is a process because our own emotional experiences tell us differently. We are conditioned to not experience fear. Fear is not an acceptable emotion in our society. Men are supposed to be strong and not show emotions. Women are perceived as weak and unable to take care of themselves. We live in an emotionally suppressed and phobic society. It takes a lot of courage to express our true feelings, especially fear. Initially I experienced my own challenges with this concept. My process with this continues, it is not yet finished.

My process started in 2003 I saw Bryan Post in Kansas City for the first time. He was presenting at a reactive disorder workshop. This was my first contact with him. I don't remember learning much about his stress model. That was due to my mind set at that time. I was looking for technique. I wanted something to take back to my office and do. Something I could do to help my patients. I was drawn to the way he was able to get at the deep hurt that was inside children. I knew that hurt was there and that it caused all of their anger and acting out. Bryan had not written the book *Beyond Consequences* yet. He gave us a CD to listen to and I am embarrassed to say I didn't even listen to it. So, like with most workshops, I left that one feeling empty handed. I am not blaming Bryan, it was a good workshop. I was not ready to take the next step in my personal growth to be able to apply the principles. I didn't even know that was what I needed to do.

The next time that I came into contact with Bryan Post was in November, 2008 in St. Joseph, MO. I attended a one day workshop where he presented his Stress Model. I heard very clearly that love and fear are the two primary emotions. I initially felt resistance to that, thinking that, I don't have a lot of fear. I could really feel the resistance in the audience. I thought there has got to be something else, it can't be that simple. Again, I was drawn to what he was saying. I continued to listen with an open mind. As he went through the theory and the process, it all began to make sense. I was sitting there feeling very excited about this. It really spoke to me. It opened up my mind's eye, it opened up my heart, and it opened up my ears to listen differently. While at the seminar I ordered several hundreds of dollars worth of CD's, DVD's, and printed material. Over the next short period of time I reflected on love and fear as being primary. I studied the stress model and started using it immediately with clients. I saw amazing results, along with some initial resistant by clients.

I started connecting the stress model to spiritual truths and principles. Immediately two things came to mind was in the beginning God said let there be light and the heavens and earth were created. Genesis 1:1-5. In the garden, there was perfect love. There was peace, happiness, and joy. Then sin entered and the fall of man. Eve took a bite of the apple, and of course Adam blamed her, and Eve blamed the snake. So, I look at that and say, "hmmmm, isn't that like us today?" When Adam and Eve were hiding God was looking for them. God asked them where they were. They answered that they were hiding because they were afraid. Some translations say ashamed. Of course God knew where they were physically, but he was speaking more to where they were spiritually. So sin entered the garden and fear and shame took over, pushing out love. The second thing is in Genesis 2:7. God formed man from the dust of the ground

and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. You don't go to a Post seminar or read or listen to any of Bryan's educational material without hearing or reading the word breath many, many times. It's as plain as the nose on your face that breathing is important. That's how God jump started man.

The families and children that I work with in counseling have a lot of fear in them. They also have a lot of shame, that is, they do not feel worthy. They are not good enough. They don't measure up. Something is wrong with them. The emotional wreckage that these families and children carry with them is caused by the many faces of abuse. It is caused by all kinds of emotional trauma and neglect. Bottom line, the wreckage is caused by sin. The Bible is our manual for healing from our sin. The stress model is a manual for healing emotional trauma. Combining the stress model with spiritual truths gives us a powerful tool for healing and restoration.

A word search in the NIV reveals that love is mentioned 697 times and fear is mentioned 326 times. This is another clue that love and fear are the two basic emotions. The only other feeling word I searched for was anger, which is mentioned 270 times. Anger is an emotion that alerts us to the fact that something is wrong or that we are in danger. I don't believe it's too hard to realize that underneath our anger is the basic emotion of fear. Check it out for yourself, there is not much in the Bible that's based on a lot of feeling words other than these. I encourage you to explore your feelings and determine what is at the core of what you are feeling. With careful and honest evaluation, you will be surprised how much you find that you are motivated by fear. I also hope that you will find out how much you are motivated by love and that becomes your focus.

The stress model tells us that we need to move from a place of fear to a place of love to help our children heal. Jesus modeled that for us in his ministry. Even though in the flesh that may have been hard for him at times, he did it perfectly. We cannot do it perfectly, but we can model what Jesus did. Not too long ago "WWJD" was a popular catch phrase. If taken seriously, it can be very powerful. It is powerful when we use Biblical principles to do what Jesus would have done. This becomes a heart issues, not a behavior management issue.

Nehemiah 8:10 (New International Version): Nehemiah said, ". . . Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." A word search finds joy is in the NIV 59 times. These scriptures all talk about joy in relationship to God. Alan Shores states that joy is the key to attachment. That jumped right out and hit me right between the eyes. During parent training, I stop the DVD where that is quoted. I stop it because it is such a powerful statement and can easily be overlooked.

Spiritually, joy is a co-regulation process between our heavenly Father and ourselves. The stress model teaches co-regulation between us and our children. Medical science validates that neurological process in the natural. It is also taking place in the

spiritual. David the Psalmist started his prayers and songs out in anguish and fear. He reached out to his Heavenly Father from a place of fear and stress. He was dys-regulated as defined by the stress model. He went from dysregulation to a state of comfort and joy. He experienced love from his father. Our children reach out to us in negative behaviors. Many times that is how they communicate with us. They are feeling like David felt. The stress model teaches us to respond in love. That is how God responded to David. We are to demonstrate acceptance and authenticity. When we do that, our children are comforted and feel the joy and power of love.

It was easy for David to connect with God. God does not become dysregulated and removed from a state of love like we do. As parents we need to take responsibility and help our children regulate. A child cannot connect in relationship with a parent unless the parent is regulated. Without regulation a parent cannot provide a safe base for child to connect in relationship. This is a paradigm principle from the stress model. David knew that God was always a safe place for him. Parents need to work toward always being a safe place for their children.

Parents struggle with this because the world we live in is stressful and chaotic. Parents need to provide a horizontal love relationship with their children. This can be accomplished by having a vertical love relationship with God. As parents we need to go to God to help get us in a state of love. A place of emotional regulation, free from fear. It is very hard to do this on our own. As we become regulated and emotionally safe, our children will be drawn to us just like we are drawn to our father. When we have quiet time with God we hear from him. We then receive solutions and answers to our problems. His peace and love gets us where we need to be. When we become safe for children they become regulated. In a regulated state they can begin to find solutions. They need us there as a solid base so they can learn and grow and mature. That's not to say that we shouldn't offer suggestions and guidance from time to time. When regulated they'll be more open to suggestions.

When we go to our heavenly father in prayer because of our own dysregulation he comforts us. When we are comforted and regulated we come to a different understanding of our situation. Ideas and strategies seem to come alive and pop into your head. Could this be the whisper of the Holy Spirit? Quite possibly so. Just like with our children, it is in those times of chaos and stress in our lives that we receive the greatest healing. We fight, kick and scream to stay out of valleys and the low spots. They still come into our lives when we least expect them. We can experience exponential growth every time we allow ourselves to go to those hard places to heal. Sometimes we're forced there by circumstances and situations and sometimes we have the courage to go there ourselves. Our children give us opportunities to help them grow every day. We need to recognize their challenging behaviors as opportunities for healing. God is always there for us and we need to be there for our children.