

Breaking Down the Model: Part II - Core Issues

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In Part I of "Breaking Down the Model, the Nature of the Child" column was discussed. To review Part I: We discussed the history of The Model of Developmental Immaturity and how The Model is incorporated into treatment at The Meadows. We learned the definition of co-dependency and the five primary symptoms of co-dependency. Now, it is time to get into the core of the model, the Core Issues. The five core issues are:

- Self-Esteem
- Boundaries
- Reality
- Dependency
- Moderation/Containment.

As stated in Part I, the Core Issues are caused by childhood trauma, in the form of anything that was less than nurturing in childhood. Less than nurturing behaviour comes in the form of enmeshment, neglect, abandonment, or abuse. The Core Issues (Column II of the Developmental Immaturity Issues) have to do with how we operate in extremes. These extremes were set up in childhood.

Let us compare the connection of Column I (Nature of the Child) to Column II (Core Issues) before exploring each of the Core Issues. As stated previously, core issues emerge due to less than nurturing events in childhood.

The nature of a child is to feel valuable just as he/she is. If a caregiver falsely empowers a child, the child will feel better than in Core Issue #1 (Self-Esteem). A parent (caregiver) can falsely empower a child by enmeshing with the child, telling the child that they are the hero, the best, or that they are always right. A parent can falsely empower a child by not allowing the child to take responsibility for mistakes the child has made. If a parent disempowers a child, the child will feel less than in Core Issue #1. A parent can disempower the child by neglecting the child, abandoning the child, putting the child down, calling the child names and such.

The nature of a child is to be vulnerable and to accept protection when needed. If a child is parented without boundaries or with using walls, the child will be too vulnerable or invulnerable in Core Issue #2 (Boundaries).

The nature of the child is to be imperfect and human. This is about Core Issue #3 (Reality). If a caregiver identifies a child's humanity as "good or bad," the child will be rebellious or perfectionist. This happens when a parent attacks or over-praises the child's humanity, rather than looking at the child's behaviour. An example of this is a mother slapping her young daughter's hand for spilling milk and saying, "bad girl," instead of mom letting her daughter know that she made a mistake, like all humans do. If mom continues to parent by saying "bad girl" instead of looking at the humanity of mistakes, young daughter will grow up believing she is bad and will be rebellious as a child and into adulthood.

The nature of the child is to be dependent on other people for wants and needs that the child cannot provide for himself. This refers to Core issue #4 (Dependency). If a parent shames a child's wants or needs, the child will be needless/wantless as an adult. If a

parent is needy towards a child, the child will be anti-dependent as an adult. If a parent neglects a child's needs or wants, the child will be too dependent as an adult.

The nature of the child is to be spontaneous and open. This has to do with Core Issue #5 (Moderation/Containment). If a parent fails to set limits on the child, the child will grow up to be in control of being out of control. If the parent focuses on the child being good and perfect, the child will grow up to be too contained and controlling of others.

Let us examine each of the Core Issues a bit more, starting with the Core Issue of Self-Esteem. Self-Esteem is a knowing that you are valuable and have worth. **Self-Esteem** is about being able to say, "I have inherent worth" and believing this statement. There are two big lies we tell ourselves:

1. I am better than.
2. I am less than.

When we tell ourselves we are better than, we have been falsely empowered as a child. When we tell ourselves we are less than, we have been disempowered and undervalued as a child. Our strengths do not make us better than and our weaknesses do not make us less than. We are all valuable and precious. Recovery is about appreciating our strengths and learning from our weaknesses in the interest of being relational.

The second Core Issue is **Boundaries**. Boundaries have to do with protection and containment. In the extremes, we are either inadequately protected or being overprotected in any or all boundary areas; physical, sexual, or internal.

Physical boundaries let you know that you have the right to determine how close another person gets to you and whether another person can touch you or your personal property. When we use containment, we are containing how close we get to another person and not touching the person or their property without permission.

Sexual boundaries let you know you have the right to determine with whom, when, where and how you are going to be sexual. When we use containment with our sexual boundary, we are respecting another person's sexual rights.

Internal boundaries allow us to contain and protect our thinking, feelings, and behaviour when we are talking to or listening to others. We demonstrate use of the talking boundary by talking to someone with respect and without blaming, controlling, or manipulating. We demonstrate use of the listening boundary by listening to someone with respect and curiosity.

When we protect ourselves, we keep ourselves from being victims. When we contain ourselves, we keep ourselves from being offensive. Boundaries help us mitigate our relationships. Recovery is about protecting and containing ourselves in a functional manner; not being too vulnerable and not putting up walls.

The third Core Issue is **Reality**. Reality has to do with self-identity. Reality asks the question: "Who Am I in this moment?" Reality issues are the hub of the wheel of the core issues. If a person struggles with reality, he/she is allergic to the self. When a child is not allowed to be himself/herself, the child will see self as bad or good. As mentioned previously, a parent defining a child as bad or good sets up rebelliousness or

perfectionism. Recovery comes when we can see and accept ourselves as human in all areas of our life, our physical self, our thinking, our emotions, and our behaviour.

The fourth Core Issue is **Dependency**. Dependency has to do with self-care around our needs and wants. What is the difference between needs and wants? Needs are basic to survival. Needs keep our body, mind, and soul in balance. Wants are not necessary for survival, yet they are important to our sense of abundance. Our wants bring us joy.

Being too dependent comes from not having needs and wants met as a child. The adult will have expectations that others will take care of needs and wants that he/she can take care of on their own. Being needless/wantless comes from being neglected or being shamed for having needs and wants as child. The adult will be detached from their needs or wants. Being anti-dependent comes from having a sense of our needs and wants yet refusing to ask for them or refusing to acknowledge those needs and wants. Recovery is about being interdependent.

How can you be interdependent? There are three rules to being interdependent:

3. Being able to ask for help when you truly need it.
4. Being willing to help someone when they make a reasonable request.
5. Being able to say “No” for self-care. This keeps you from stretching yourself into resentment.

The fifth core issue is **Moderation/Containment**. Moderation and containment have to do with living in moderation and containing spontaneity. When a child gets shamed or traumatized around being spontaneous or a child is told they are not spontaneous enough, (a shy child being told to go out and do something), issues are set up around moderation and containment.

The “out of control” person will do what he/she is going to do when he/she wants to, thus controlling with chaos. The “controlling” person will try to control others by trying to be good and perfect. This kind of behaviour shuts down relationships. Recovery is about learning to use your personal boundaries to contain yourself so that you are containing spontaneity in a functional adult manner. This leads to being relational without being abusive.

When we are at the extremes in the Core Issues, we are living in immaturity in the Core Issues. Recovery happens when we have recovery in all core issues. There is no recovery without core recovery. Recovery is about living in truth and love. We do this by coming close to the centre in each of the core issues.

In Part III of Breaking Down the Model, we will explore secondary symptoms which are driven by immaturity in the Core Issues.

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