

Breaking Down the Model: Part III - Secondary Symptoms

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Up to this point, we have 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. We have identified the Five Core Issues: Self-Esteem, Boundaries, Reality, Dependency and Moderation. We discussed how living in extremes in the Core Issues leads to immaturity issues. We will now explore the Secondary Symptoms resulting from living in the extremes in the Core Issues. This is where The Model of Developmental Immaturity gets interesting. Columns I (The Nature of the Child) and II (The Core Issues) are tracked straight across. Once we enter Column III (Secondary Symptoms), the chart can spider-web and does not necessarily continue tracking straight across. For instance, with self-esteem issues, we can travel down to addiction issues and mood disorders, or we can experience spirituality issues or any of the other Secondary Symptoms. This is the case with all The Core Issues. Being in the extreme in any Core Issue can lead to any or all of the Secondary Symptoms. The Secondary Symptoms describe the unmanageability in our life due to trauma and immaturity. We will explore each of the Secondary Symptoms.

Negative Control Issues

Negative control issues have to do with being controlling of other people. This comes from a lack of respect for the right of other people to be who they are. Negative control issues can lead us to use manipulation and sarcasm to control other people. Negative control happens when we believe we have the right to determine what another person looks like, thinks, feels, and does or does not do. On the other hand, negative control can be allowing someone else to control us. Allowing someone else to control how we look, think, feel and act is a part of negative control. How does negative control affect The Core Issues? Negative control can lead to:

- Self-esteem – If we are struggling with esteeming ourselves and someone has an opinion about us that we do not like, we will try to control what they think in order to feel good about ourselves. This may take the form of arguing, sarcasm, or rationalizing.
- Boundaries – If we are struggling with functional boundaries, we have difficulty separating our own reality from someone else's reality about us. If our external boundary is dysfunctional, we often give ourselves permission to do what we want to do, when we want to. We give ourselves permission to touch or keep our distance without considering the comfort level of others. Our boundaries can also be impaired by not setting boundaries with how close people get to us and not stopping people from touching us. Negative control occurs in boundaries when we either determine what we can do with someone physically without permission or we give too much permission, when it is not in our best interest.
- Reality – If we struggle with knowing who we are, we try to control what others think to fulfil someone else's expectations. We often do this without being aware we are doing this. We try to convince others of who we are, so that they believe in this "made-up" person we present ourselves as.
- Dependency (needs and wants) – If we have trouble taking care of our needs and wants, we try to control others' behaviours so that they take care of our needs or wants. We then

can become angry when someone cannot read our minds and take care of these needs and wants.

Resentment Issues

Resentment issues have to do with being unable to let go of resentments after being victimized by another person. The “victim” stays in resentment by trying to get the offender to admit the violation, to express regret and/or to right the wrong. It is a possibility that the offender might never do any of these things. Thus, instead of focusing on protection and good self-care to overcome past violations, the victim remains a victim and continues to build resentment. Resentment can take the form of running old tapes in our head and replaying these tapes to try to get revenge. Resentment, in the most extreme form, is like taking poison and waiting for someone else to die. Trying to get revenge leads to the opposite of what we want. Continuing to hold onto resentment can lead to further isolation, increased shame, pain, and anger.

How does resentment affect The Core Issues? Much like negative control, resentment can lead to:

- Self-esteem – If we think that someone has offended us, our self-esteem lowers, and we feel shame. We may feel a need to punish the person to redeem our value. We resort to getting even to restore our own self-esteem. Self-esteem is affected by the better than position, also. If we believe we are better than, we give ourselves the right to react in anger and offend the other person.
- Boundaries – Often, with resentment, we have no boundaries, thus we offend and can be powerless to stop offending. The resentment we hold onto brings a need to get even.
- Reality – By holding onto resentment, we are likely to misinterpret situations that happen and think we have been wronged when we have not been. This can lead to hostility and offensive behaviour toward the perceived offender.

Spirituality Issues

Spirituality issues have to do with having no connection to a higher power. Having no connection to a higher power can result from having problems facing who we are or being unwilling to see others as they are. Spirituality issues include making others or our addictions our higher power or trying to be the higher power. Neither of these is about living in truth; which is the basis of spirituality.

How do spirituality issues affect The Core Issues? Spirituality issues affect two areas in The Core Issues:

- Self-esteem – If we believe we are worthless, this may lead to not believing we are worthy to relate to a higher power. This can lead to us alienating ourselves from others and from our higher power. If we are trying to be our own higher power due to thinking we are better than, we do not need an external higher power. Either way, we harm our spiritual recovery.
- Reality – Becoming truly spiritual requires that we admit and share our imperfections and mistakes and that we listen when others share their imperfections and mistakes. Not being able to do this robs us of a nurturing spiritual relationship with our higher power.

Addiction and Mood Disorders

Addiction problems usually manifest to medicate reality or to create intensity. Addictions stem from co-dependency. Any substance or process that relieves our distress can become an addiction. This includes addictions to substances, such as alcohol and drugs. This also includes addictions to behaviours/processes, such as eating disorders, gambling, and sex addiction. All these substance addictions and behavioural addictions can develop from a want to medicate unwanted reality or a way to relieve pain.

When we are so afraid of the painful reality of our childhood, this can lead to mood disorders, such as depression or anxiety. We can use the depression and anxiety to avoid the pain of dealing with the past or with our present situations. Depression or anxiety can let us continue to keep what happened in the past as non-existent, leading to denial and not moving into recovery.

In this area, it is important to discuss physical illness, as well. The stress of avoiding pain or owning our own reality can lead us to physical illnesses for which there are no true medical reasons. We can often suffer chronic symptoms that persist in our lives. Many of these symptoms may result from not expressing our feelings. Examples of physical symptoms are headaches, high blood pressure, and asthma.

How do Addiction, Mood Disorders and Physical issues affect The Core Issues? When we avoid reality through addictions, mood disorders and/or physical illnesses, we can develop:

- Self-esteem – Addictions, mood disorders and physical illnesses can lead to us feeling less than other people. We can also use our substance abuse to be arrogant and better than and continue in addiction to avoid loneliness and shame. Whether we believe we are less than or better than, we cannot be in an honest, trustworthy relationship with others.
- Reality - When we are stuck in addictions, mood disorders and physical illnesses, we often want to avoid feeling emotions. Thus, we medicate our feelings and become removed from our own reality of what is.

Intimacy Issues

Intimacy issues have to do with difficulty in being relational. Intimacy does not just refer to physical or sexual intimacy. Intimacy has to do with being vulnerable enough to let someone know us emotionally, spiritually, and intellectually. Intimacy also has to do with respectful curiosity to know someone else on an emotional, spiritual, and intellectual level. Trauma can lead to difficulty being intimate and being relational.

How do intimacy issues affect The Core Issues? Intimacy issues affect every area of The Core Issues. An impaired ability to sustain functional intimacy can lead to:

- Self-esteem – If we are in the less than position, we compare ourselves to others and come up short. Thus, we cannot truthfully share in an intimate way because we fear others will find out how defective we are. If we are in the better than position, we often judge others. This makes it uncomfortable for someone to be around us.
- Boundaries – Intimacy is blocked when we are in the victim or the offender role. We cannot get to know others or share who we are if we do not have a functional internal boundary.
- Reality – If we struggle with knowing who we are, we cannot share ourselves with others. If we are looking for someone else to define who we are, then we may try to change how

we think, feel and act. This can lead to dishonest and manipulative behaviour that does not allow for intimacy.

- Dependency (needs and wants) - If we are too dependent on others to meet our needs and wants, we risk becoming the child in a relationship, rather than an equal adult in the relationship. If we are stubborn about our independence and do not ask for help, intimacy is blocked because we stop sharing our needs and wants. If we deny our needs our wants completely, then we are out of touch with our own humanity and are, in essence, not operating as a real person in a way to be intimate with others.
- Moderation/Containment– If we behave in a way that shows no containment, (angry outbursts, threatening behaviours, extreme intensity), there is no intimacy. If we share who we are in an intense and frightening manner, we are blocking true intimacy. The other side of this is shutting down our emotions and shutting others out. This leads to intimacy dying. True adult to adult intimacy is about being able to be spontaneous and fun while being responsible and respectful.

We have now explored the first 3 columns of The Model of Developmental Immaturity Issues. Childhood Trauma causes Immaturity in The Core Issues. Trauma and Immaturity drive the Secondary Symptoms leading to unmanageability in our lives. Trauma, immaturity, and unmanageability create Relational Problems. We will explore Relational Problems in Part IV of Breaking Down the Model.

Resource: Mellody P. (1989). Facing Co-dependency. New York: HaperCollins.

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