

Week 22 - Making a Mountain out of Molehill



Have you ever asked yourself, “Why am I taking this so personally?” “Am I being oversensitive?” These are excellent questions to ask because the question itself opens up a space in us for an answer, as we seek to understand why we are so very hurt by other people’s judgments, their disregard, their lack of interest, their attacks and criticisms, their unresponsiveness etc.

If you do take something personally - meaning that something someone else does or says about you, or to you, *is* “all about you,” then you are trapped in the illusion of believing

yourself to be bad, worthless, unlovable, or at least, not good enough. In other words, your inner suffering - shame and fear - is activated and puts you on red alert for possible danger to your value.

Clearly your value is on shaky ground. And if you collapse into this childhood belief and emotional experience of a toddler, you will react defensively and “make a mountain out of a molehill,” by accessing the same resources you had as a toddler.

You can go on the defense (childhood resource) in passive, passive/aggressive or aggressive ways.

An example of a passive way externally, and a very aggressive way internally, is to “take responsibility,” for our awful crime and pay penance and “make up” for our “terrible self” by acts of contrition, apology, begging forgiveness, giving gifts, doing anything to appease the other person etc. This is a vain attempt to prove ourselves good, contrite, humble, repentant, to ourselves and others, when we make a mistake.

In other words, when you make a small mistake, not even intentionally, and the other person is mad at you, (they have taken it personally) you grovel and agree with them that you are indeed a horrible person and then try to appease them with whatever they want from you. Can you see how this is an agreement with them that you are a bad person at a very young level? Can you see how you are now the internal raging parent shaming your own small inner self for making a mistake. Externally passive and compliant, internally sadistic. You have now made a “mountain out of a molehill” and there is no perspective or understanding of the inner dynamic. This can then give the other person the impression that they were right in the way they behaved and reinforces their judgment of you. It gives the other person power, which is exactly what they do not need to have in being judgmental. Internally when you grovel you feel more shame, even if you have bought safety from doing so.

An aggressive way of dealing with some “crime,” another commits against you - in other words, when they fail to meet your need for value and lovability in the ways you want, then you attack them and vilify them with judgments and blaming and turning the issue around on them. This is a reversal of the above dynamic. You now terrorize your inner younger selves with outer aggression (called justifiable protection and self-defense). This gives the message to younger parts of yourself that you did indeed do something so awful that it must be defended against and so reinforces the shame. The outer action is shameful and so you now have two layers of shame. This again indicates a lack of awareness of why others behave the way they do. You have taken it all

personally and made it about you being a shameful, bad and unlovable person. So however, you perceive someone else to have “slighted you,” you make a “mountain out of a molehill” both internally and externally.

The passive aggressive response is obvious. You feel internally shameful and unlovable, you outwardly grovel and inwardly attack the other person. The apology is not genuine. It is an outward “I’m sorry,” and an inner “fuck you,” to the other person.

In passive and passive aggressive defenses, rage is being suppressed and will build internally until there is an eruption when least expected – when you are not on guard against the shame of exploding. Then aggression will come with all the rage of the repressed inner emotion.

So actually, it **IS** all about you.

The work, when you are triggered, is to go inward to the feelings of shame, inadequacy, worthlessness, and fear that you are not good enough, see the belief system you have when someone is not happy with you and be PRESENT to this without collapsing to the age at which you were shamed, ignored, rejected etc. The adult must find the right proportion in order to know the right response – which would not be any of the above ways of dealing with the relationship, either, internally or externally. Unless you can face pain with adult resource, you will be trapped in dynamics of judgment and blame internally and externally, and the conflict will rage within and without. Your ways of dealing with these big feelings as a child was in proportion to what was happening. Now it is not. (Consider the power differential between a parent and child.)

Deliberately, I do not give you the “how to,” of a creative, loving, connected and assertive response. This can only happen with any degree of authenticity once you have done the inner work of getting things into the right perspective and seeing the underlying suffering of yourself and the other person leading to all the petty little wars we enact internally and on one another. Remember that internal petty wars, lead to large external wars.

Exercise:

Consider examples of where you have made a “mountain out of a molehill” by attacking another person for some perceived slight, judgment, attack, rejection and see if you can do the inner work of seeing this more clearly – for them and for you.

Consider how you have made a “mountain out of a molehill” by attacking yourself for some accusation you or another person has made of you.

Find a way to share this with the group, or someone in the group or in your individual session with me.

If you are resisting this notion and feel firmly justified in your responses, notice the resistance – the higher the resistance, the greater the underlying pain.