<u>Rethinking Hatred: What Does Hate Have to Do With Inner Peace?</u>
"Responsibility for working for peace lies not only with our leaders, but also with each of us individually. Peace starts within each one of us. When we have inner peace, we can be at peace with those around us." ~ Dalai Lama

What *does* hate have to do with inner peace? Hatred is one of our most taboo emotions, yet, like anger, it is a normal feeling. Anger, for example, has come out of the "taboo" closet in the last several years, and is now recognized as natural, potentially healthy and useful if channeled consciously, freeing up energy to create change, set boundaries or stand up for injustice.

Meanwhile, hatred is considered "spiritually incorrect." We are told to get rid of our hatred, to "just not feel that way." But what happens when we *do* feel that way? What is not dealt with consciously goes underground, and comes out sideways. The more we try to be good (by suppressing our "bad" feelings), the more hatred gets suppressed, leaking out through, at its most benign cutting remarks, shaming, nit-picking, passive-aggression, undermining, sniping, bullying, little digs, humiliation, spiteful comments, etcetera.

How might we think about hatred in a new way? We can consider hatred as our psyche's attempt to regain our equilibrium and inner peace (this might seem like a stretch, but bear with me!). When something disturbs our tranquility, we become agitated. We get angry or frustrated at what we perceive is disturbing or upsetting us. We might do what we can to stop it. If our attempts to change the offending person or situation fail, we start to feel powerless. Then we start "hating" what or who it is that is making us feel so powerless, angry, helpless or frustrated. In other words, we want what is disturbing us to disappear, go away, not exist or die. Hatred is blocked or frustrated anger. Hatred is our attempt to get back to our inner peace. "If only this person or situation didn't exist, I would feel fine."

An example might help. As a child, I hated my younger brother. He was two years younger than me, always getting into my things, following me around, and tagging along with my friends. Not to mention that he had usurped my position as the one-and-only (first-born) child in our household. To me, my world would have clearly been a better place without his existence. I felt like killing him. I had always felt guilty about my feelings towards my brother, until I realized – quite recently – that my hatred was not a malevolent or evil force within me. It was simply my psyche's attempt to get rid of what was agitating and upsetting me, and what I was powerless to change.

We can understand what we might hate in our lives by examining the following equation: If only X happened, I would be happy or peaceful or have no problems (whatever words work for you). We've made our inner peace conditional, based on external circumstances. "If only the bad guys were dead, we'd be at peace." I was disappointed in the film "Avatar." Touted as a seminal work in raising consciousness, it nevertheless reverted to our age-old solution: kill off the bad guy, instead of offering a new alternative of integration and inclusion. Likewise, much political commentary would have us believe that if the other party didn't exist, the world would be a better place. Everyone has a different version of who the bad guy is.

By "inquiring within" and following the clues that our feelings of hatred provide, we can find where, in our lives, we are feeling powerless. With this insight, we might be able to find new ways to reclaim our power. This does *not* mean acting out our hatred. It is about *not* rejecting our feelings, skillfully dealing with them and using them as a tool for inner understanding.

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