

Self-Enquiry Journal Exercises - Comfort in Pain

Comfort in Blame: Blame and denial are close friends. Denial is failure to acknowledge an unacceptable truth or emotion or to admit it into consciousness, used as a defense mechanism. Blame is to assign fault or hold someone else responsible (many times for our emotions and situations), or self-blame which assigns too much responsibility to ourselves denying a situation or relationship that may be toxic. How to tell:

- Am I remaining in harmful patterns and justifying them with excuses (also fear)?
- Am I blaming myself for others bad behavior in order to be a prisoner to an unhappy situation?
- Am I blaming another individual for my lack of happiness or fulfillment?
- Do I lack the ability to recognize the level of availability in another, romanticizing reality (denial)?
- Am I rejecting my responsibility, judging others, and projecting my fears?
- Do I have lack of empathy for myself and/or others experience?

Comfort in Shame: Shame greatly contributes to the deterioration of self-esteem. When we feel flawed in our core, we look to confirm this truth through thoughts and actions. Shame tells us what we are worthy of in this life and it disconnects us from connecting authentically with others through intimacy. It keeps us in harmful cycles that act as outlets for self-punishment. How to tell:

- Do I feel unlovable or that others will not accept me or where I have been?
- If so, do I stay in situations even if unhappy because I feel this person is the only one that will accept me?
- Do I invite others to reject, shame or express anger toward me?
- Do I pull people toward me only to push them away (also fear)?
- Do I project feelings of inadequacy onto people around me?
- Do I shame others to get a desired result?
- Do I create situations or make bad decisions to reinforce feelings of shame?
- Do I attempt to feel superior to others so that I can avoid my own feelings of shame?

Comfort in Fear: There are certain universal truths around fear. There are also unique and individual ideas around fear that are customized to our personal experiences and behaviors. We can be afraid of failure, fear success, be afraid of relationships, or even fear germs. It is an emotion that motivates action or inaction in our lives. How to tell:

- Am I afraid to be alone?
- Am I attempting to conform, obey, and/or people please even if I don't want to or agree?
- Am I attempting to govern, regulate and control others?
- Am I attempting to suppress, withhold or evade emotions or facts?
- Am I being overly critical of others that are attempting to do something I dream of doing?
- Am I avoiding feeling vulnerable with others?
- Am I perceiving many people to be threats?

Comfort in Guilt: Depending on how we were raised, we may feel guilty for not being able to be a good enough son or daughter, not being able to save our mother or father from disease, destruction, or death, or not fitting in to societal norms that were unjustly assigned to us. We may now play this guilt out in many areas of our lives. How to tell:

- Am I acting or making choices from a place of low confidence, self-respect, or unhealthy self-esteem, not because I actually want to?
- Am I overlooking my needs for everyone else's needs?
- Contrary to past evidence, do I believe that making changes or putting in more work will change an unhealthy and toxic relationship or situation?
- Do I find myself more concerned with another individuals, organizations, or groups feelings, than my own?
- Am I unable to articulate my feelings or needs, and when I do, I feel bad or like apologizing?
- Am I overly responsible?