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THE BEAUTIFUL BODY SYNDROME

You haven't heard of the "beautiful body syndrome"? Well that's probably because there is no such formal diagnosis. But I'm sure you've heard of bulimia and anorexia nervosa haven't you? Those are *bona fide* diagnoses that all too many young and not so young women ... and even some young men ... are suffering from. The late, great singer Karen Carpenter was probably the first celebrity that brought those diagnoses to the attention of the American public several years ago and the battle for thinness still goes on. What's it all about? We know that the need to be thin is something that most people desire but what might lie behind that need? Even though death may not be the final outcome, the damage done to the brain, body, mind and emotions can be irreparable. It is truly a scourge and there is clearly an addictive quality to these diagnoses. In this article, I am going to take a closer look in order to understand them better.

I suppose that most professionals would first attack this problem by talking about "body image" and "self concept". Indeed, those are real components that make up these problems but might there be something behind those that needs exploration as well? I believe so. I believe that an underlying cause behind these very dangerous practices is the need for control ... control that people desperately need since they do not feel that there is any other real controls in their lives that they can call upon. From the time that we are born, seeking ways to control becomes an issue. Some examples of needing control are an infant's cry to be fed or changed, a child's manipulating his or her parents or a five year old desperately trying to maintain balance in learning how to ride a bike. Exercising control over our environments and destinies have always been essential to our survival.

Emotionally and psychologically, people need to feel safe, worthy, comfortable, accepted, loved, admired, desirable, needed, appreciated and valued. If we were to stand back and perceive what might be going on in our society, rejection in the form of criticism, anger and rage are rampant in all too many areas of our lives. In my practice as a psychotherapist, I found that rejection is probably one of the most devastating experiences that someone can have. Why? Because as humans, feeling unloved is intolerable. There is no greater need that we have than to love and feel loved. And so in order to gain a foothold, people will go to extreme forms of control in order to experience that sense of loving and being loved.

People going to extremes to fix or prevent rejection from reoccurring usually create a worse problem in the process and is based on feeling that they have no control over their lives and the sense of rejection that they actually or potentially might experience. Many people have an irrational fear that they might be rejected based on fears stemming from the experiences of others and will go to extremes to prevent happening to them. The attempts to control rejection from reoccurring could otherwise be focused on changing behavior or attitude but instead, the body becomes the focal point of the remedy. Fad diets, fasting, over-the-counter diet pills, hundreds of internet websites that tout losing weight quickly as well as the push to prevent obesity are all aimed at becoming thin. I also believe that a basic reason, why people overeat to the point of obesity contains the same element of control. Eating brings comfort and comfort brings control.

The more desperate people become, the more they lose control. These points may help.

- First, learn relaxation methods to control anxiety and extreme thought processes so as not to panic;
- Second, be aware of your uniqueness as a human being to emphasize your independence instead of a need to conform;
- Finally, become aware of those who truly love you for who you are. They will provide the basis of loving and being loved by another quality human being.

A Brief Biographical Sketch

After an over 40 year career as a professional psychotherapist and Director of The Sports Stress Clinic in Amherst, NY, Charles Bonasera came to Florida and decided to use the benefits of his previous professional experiences in his new roles of Consultant in Life Management and Business Coaching as well as his expertise as a Motivational Speaker. He once again became involved with athletes in different sports training them with his techniques to help them develop and maintain focus as well as staying in their zone. Much of his training methods are derived from the CD collection he developed under the heading of WIN-WIN SECRETS as the President of Personal Identity Controls. This collection consists of thirty-six programs dealing with vital issues in the management of stress.

Another role that he adopted to add to his professional career was that of Author. Early in the 1980's he wrote Guide to a Life Management Process which he has re-written as a workbook to successfully help people manage their stress which includes his own Working Model. As a result in his interest in golf and realizing that it was essentially a "mind game", he wrote The Mental Side of Golf which can benefit the beginner as well as professionals playing the game of golf.

He then compiled over five-hundred sayings that he had developed in the course of his professional career as stimuli to help people change patterns in their lives entitled How to Stay Well and Live Life to the Fullest. This was followed by a book documenting

case studies around disruptive life patterns including ways to change them under the name of How in the Hell Did This Happen to Me? Both his personal involvement in sports as a participant, coach, manager and in his role in officiating, inspired him to write a primer for parents and coaches entitled The Legend of Little League.

Charles invites you to view his website at www.charlesmbonasera.com as well as to write with your comments and questions to his e-mail address (charles@charlesmbonasera.com). He would also be very happy to communicate with his readers by telephone should they desire. His professional motto is “seeking alternative methods to happiness” and wishes those touched by his words to practice the three secrets to a happy life: “enjoy life and enjoy it thoroughly ... develop and maintain a sense of humor ... bring as much love into your life as possible.