



Self-Responsibility Starts with an "I"

Josie is a woman in her twenties. She lives at home with her mother who makes all of Josie's important decisions: how to spend her money, who to go out with, even what clothes to wear. Josie is anxious and depressed.

Matt ordered a new printer for his office. When it arrived he discovered it wasn't compatible with his computer. "Those idiots," he ranted, "why didn't they tell me this was the wrong printer?"

Sally and Jerry had a fight. Now Sally's tossing and turning in the bedroom while Jerry beds down on the sofa. Neither is getting any sleep and both think the other should make the first move to apologize.

Josie, Matt, Sally and Jerry all have in common a lack of self-responsibility that leaves them dependent, impotent and victimized. They're caught up in blaming others for their problems and waiting for somebody else to come along and make their life all right. Unfortunately, they're going to have a long wait because, in the words of self-esteem expert Nathaniel Branden, "No one is coming."

That is the good news. Your life is in your hands. You get to make the choices, elect the options and take the actions that come with self-responsibility. It's through the door of self-responsibility that personal power and independence enter, often hand-in-hand, bearing gifts of confidence and self-esteem.

Be clear, though: self-responsibility is not the same as *feeling* responsible or accepting the blame for bad things that have happened or situations that are painful. We don't all enter the world with the same trappings, and

people, events or circumstances have caused wounds from which many are recovering. Self-responsibility means that when you have worked through your grief or anger or other issues, you can ask yourself: Now what am I going to do? What options do I have?

At the other end, self-responsibility doesn't mean becoming so self-reliant that you don't ask for help when you need it or seek others' opinions or points of view. And it certainly doesn't mean you have to know everything, make every decision alone or take on the world single-handedly.

Rather than a heavy burden, self-responsibility can be a source of joy. Knowing you can create the life you want by accepting responsibility for yourself is a great freedom. Even saying the words aloud can produce a feeling of power and strength. Try it.

- I am responsible for my choices and actions.
- I am responsible for how I use my time.
- I am responsible for my behavior and communication with others.
- I am responsible for achieving my desires, dreams and wishes.
- I am responsible for the work I do and the quality I bring to that work.
- I am responsible for the values I live by and standards I set.

Accepting and acting out of self-responsibility takes practice and working through and making mistakes and falling back and, again, finding yourself in a place you didn't want to be. But that's the thing about personal growth, the place to start is where you are. *

10 Signs of Strength

Flash the Morse Code signal SOS and help is sure to come your way. Master these 10 Signs of Strength (SOS) and the help may appear in the form of improved relationships, greater joy and connection with yourself, better self-care and enhanced communication. All in all, quite a life raft!

- 1. Respond instead of react.** When we react, we give away our personal power.
- 2. Identify and learn from your judgments.** Judgments are often a reflection of our own inner needs and values.
- 3. Reach out when you need it.** Asking for help is *not* a weakness.
- 4. Keep your word**—especially to yourself. Beautiful palaces are built on this foundation of integrity.
- 5. Speak what is true for you.** Authenticity begins here, now.
- 6. Take time for yourself.** This isn't narcissistic or indulgent. Caring for yourself helps you care for others better.
- 7. Know what you want.** Take the time to figure out this one. It's worth it.
- 8. Don't take things personally.** Even if it sounds personal, it usually isn't.
- 9. Honor your limits.** Setting boundaries is an act of caring.
- 10. Recognize fear as a guide, not a barrier.** Your dark side is a friend when seen in the right light. *

A Letter From



Michelle Barone, MA, MFT

I hope you find this newsletter helpful. I am always looking for ways to help my clients find joy and lead a fulfilling life. I have spent the last year studying a process that facilitates lasting change: NET, Neuro Emotional Technique.

I am now certified in NET, a mind-body technique that I find exceptional. I have personally experienced its benefits and clients report swift, long-lasting change. If you are ready to clear old patterns, reduce stress, and unlock hidden potential, it is time to experience NET.

In line with mind-body healing, I continue to marvel at the changes that occur for people when they increase their use of whole food and whole food supplements, and eat in accordance with their unique body chemistry. Support your mental health by insuring that your physical health is also well cared for.

Your mental and physical health is your most important asset. Take time and invest in yourself.

Currently, I work with individuals, couples, families, children and teens. I bring my knowledge of interpersonal neurobiology, mind/body therapy and alternative health/education to my work. I maintain a large referral base of supportive health care providers. I currently serve on the board of the Glendale Area Mental Health Professional Association as the e-list facilitator.

Services Offered

- Individual, couple, family counseling
- Healing grief and loss
- Stress management
- Alternative education/homeschooling support

*Parenting classes and support groups
Office and phone sessions by appointment. Please visit my website www.michellebarone.net for listings of groups, classes and speaking engagements.*

Treat yourself gently,

Michelle Barone, MA, MFT

Are Your Assumptions Undermining You?

It's natural for us to instantly and automatically generate beliefs or assumptions about other people and our environment. Most likely it's a throw-back to our reptilian brain, which constantly scans to see if we are safe or in danger. Some assumptions are useful and necessary—such as assuming that night will follow day. However, other assumptions can undermine our well-being, our level of connection with others, and our overall success in the world. Take a look at the following questions to discover if your assumptions are undermining you:



True False

Set 1

- 1. I base what I believe is possible on past experiences I've had.
- 2. I assume I already know what I do and do not like and therefore stick to what I know.
- 3. I tailor what I say and do based on expressions I see on other people's faces.
- 4. I don't tell certain people what I think or feel because I already know what they will say.
- 5. I can pretty well size people up within minutes of meeting them and then know what to expect.
- 6. How I relate to people is influenced by the way they look, dress and speak.
- 7. My opinions of others are influenced by what kind of work they do and where they are from.

Set 2

- 1. I regularly examine the assumptions I have about myself to determine whether my beliefs are holding me back.
- 2. I know that my truth is not necessarily other people's truth.
- 3. When I have an assumption about someone, I check it out with that person first before acting based on what I think is true.
- 4. I make time to clear the air with my loved ones and work-mates so that we don't just assume we're on the same page.
- 5. I consciously endeavor to open my heart to people I think are different from me—and am delighted when I discover we have more in common than I had imagined.
- 6. I make an effort to learn about differing beliefs and try to keep an open mind.
- 7. I cultivate curiosity as a way to counteract my natural human tendency to make assumptions.

If you answered true more often in Set 1 and false more often in Set 2, you may wish to examine how your assumptions are undermining your relationship with yourself, others, and life in general. Please don't hesitate to call if you'd like to explore this issue further. ✱

Sex Addiction

When actor David Duchovny was treated for sex addiction in 2008, it brought attention to a topic that few people had ever discussed at a water cooler before.

Similar to food addiction, sex addiction (sometimes referred to as “sex and love addiction”) involves a natural part of life that the afflicted individual takes to extremes, harming self and sometimes others.

Drawing another parallel to food, sex addicts may over-indulge in sex or sexual activities (similar to binge eating) or they may isolate themselves to the point where they curtail almost all activities where they might face temptation or opportunity (similar to anorexia).

Some people are suspicious about sex addiction and don't want it used as an explanation or excuse for criminal sexual behavior. The *New York Times*, however, reported in 2008 that sex addiction is being considered for inclusion in the 2012 version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), a widely accepted reference in the medical industry.

What Does Sex Addiction Look Like?

Sex addicts find themselves unable to control or manage behaviors, such as compulsive sex, masturbation or viewing pornography. Some sex addicts also engage in illegal acts such as child pornography, voyeurism, molestation, rape or incest.

Sex addiction does not necessarily lead to sex offending. Moreover, not all sex offenders are sex addicts. Roughly 55 percent of convicted sex offenders can be considered sex addicts.

Sex addicts may feel so compulsive about carrying out certain behaviors that they become extremely anxious or irrational if they don't do them. Sex takes over their entire lives, and they spend practically every waking moment either acting on their urges or trying to control them.

Decades after the sexual revolution of the 1960s, many sexual behaviors are still stigmatized in various communities; that stigma leads people with sex addiction to feel even more ashamed, isolated and depressed about their feelings and actions.

What Causes Sex Addiction?

There are different theories as to what causes sex

addiction. In an article for the PsychCentral website, Michael Herkov, Ph.D, cites research that shows that as many as 82% of sex addicts suffered sexual abuse as children.

Much research has been done to support a biochemical explanation. The rush of good feelings that people experience from sexual acts may be exaggerated in the brains of sex addicts. It's similar to how alcoholics can be triggered to want more by even a small taste of alcohol.

Once the compulsion is triggered by exposure, the obsession takes over. And that exposure doesn't have to be physical; it could be thinking about or seeing something that reminds the addict of that rush.

Addicts also have other issues or problems in their life that they feel incapable of dealing with. The preoccupation with sex provides an escape from those problems.

How Does Someone Recover from Sex Addiction?

1. If you are struggling with sex addiction, the first step is to admit there is a problem and ask for help.
2. Be kind to yourself. You didn't choose to have this problem, but you can choose to do something about it.
3. There are many resources available that promote sexual health and offer assistance to sex addicts who want to recover, including your therapist and 12-Step programs such as Sex Addicts Anonymous, and Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous.
4. You can also speak to your doctor, a clinic or an anonymous help line for resources in your area.

If Someone You Love Is a Sex Addict

It is very troubling to suspect that someone you love is a sex addict. If it is your partner, then the issue encroaches on your own intimate relationship with the person. If it is another family member or friend, you may be embarrassed or ashamed to be connected with the problem.

In all cases, sex addiction is affecting your relationship and your life. And you need as much help and support as the person with the addiction. There are meetings and support programs available for you as well, including S-Anon.

Seeking help for sex addiction takes courage, but it can mean the end of suffering in silence, and the beginning of a new life, including healthy, loving relationships and hope for the future. *



What's That You Said? The Fears that Prevent Us from Speaking Up

Do you value being seen and heard?
Do you want to have truly successful relationships?

Do you want to make an impact on others?
Then speak up!

Of course, for some people, that's easier said than done. You might prefer to train wild lions than tell another person what's really on your mind. But it is possible to develop an assertiveness connected to head and heart that clears the way for honest, empowered living—without being rude to others or surrendering to “nicetitis.”

“We all need to learn to dance in rhythm to the beat of our own soul,” writes Kelly Bryson in his book, *Don't Be Nice, Be Real: Balancing Passion for Self with Compassion for Others*.

Those who stay mum when they would be better off speaking their mind do so for a variety of reasons:

• **Fear of being rejected.** Any time you risk disclosing yourself, you become vulnerable. Communications skills, such as those taught in Non-Violent Communication (NVC) or Powerful Non-Defensive Communication (PNDC), teach how to combine vulnerability with strength and

compassion for powerful connections.

• **Fear of what you would tell yourself if you or any requests you make are rejected.** If you speak up and tell your officemate how much you would like to go out with her, you definitely risk rejection. But if you are rejected, does that *really* mean you're unlovable? Destined to a life alone? Or is that just a story?

• **Fear of hurting feelings.** Related to this is the belief that it is better to please others, even at your own expense. As Bryson points out, being Mr. or Mrs. Nice Guy or Gal is actually a form of violence to yourself and others, and an escape from a fully lived life.

• **Fear of “rocking the boat,” or upsetting the status quo.** The writer Muriel Rukeyser spoke to this fear in her memorable quote: “What would happen if one woman told the truth about her life? The world would split open.”

• **Fear that you have nothing worth saying.** Years of poor self-image can lead to this.

• **Fear of sparking a conflict.** If you have an abusive or volatile family history, you may have learned to keep quiet or be invisible to avoid confrontation. And yet

the danger is that constant suppression of powerful feelings can lead to frustration and possibly aggressive or abusive behavior. As Rollo May writes in his book, *Power and Innocence*, powerlessness is the precursor to violence.

It is important to distinguish between being assertive and being aggressive. Aggression trespasses on another's boundaries without regard for feelings. Assertiveness, on the other hand, communicates feelings, thoughts and needs clearly and directly.

Speaking up after years of zipping your lips may not be easy. You may need to take baby steps—take classes or workshops, consult with a counselor, join an assertiveness support group. But the payoff is more effective relationships, genuine intimacy and, more than anything, an increased feeling of self-respect and empowerment. ✱



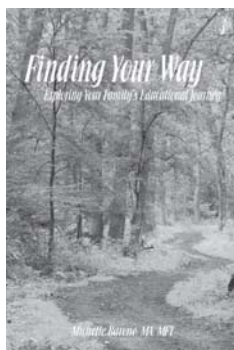
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