

A Person-Centred Approach to Breaking the Trans-Generational Cycle of Parental Rejection

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SUMMARY: This article explores the concept of self-worth as related to perceived parental rejection.

KEY WORDS: childhood, core conditions, grief, perceived parental rejection, person centred counselling

Alongside many problems that clients present with can be a lack of self-worth, often stemming from childhood, and a deep-seated sense of feeling rejected by one or both parents. This belief may be based on explicit parental behaviour, condemned as 'abusive' by society, or it may be based on more subtle, implicit behaviour, which only the child was able to perceive. The experience of feeling rejected in childhood spans a continuum, but the documented effects are said to be cross culturally universal.¹ Perceiving parental rejection in childhood can present as a constellation of negative effects throughout the lifespan. An absence, or lack of parental warmth, is frequently at the heart of a client's distress and often, although not always, takes a substantial amount of time in therapy to resolve to any satisfactory degree.²

Becoming a parent whilst carrying the burden of unprocessed trauma from perceived parental rejection (PPR), can create a disorganised attachment style in relationship with one's own children, perpetrating a trans-generation cycle of perceived rejection in offspring.³ Rejection of their own children is often the biggest, and most private fear of clients, who felt rejected by their own parents in

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