

The Miller's Wife (P.8)

The Miller's wife represents our most embarrassing part of ourselves. She represents our spineless, voiceless self that truly settles for what everyone else wants and has no opinion, idea, or meaningful existence in life. She arrives late. She criticizes. Her only identity in the world is to be the Miller's wife. Not once does she intervene or speak except to say, "Oh no, our daughter is behind the mill. She was back there sweeping dirt."

I am going to liken the Miller's wife to our shame. When we have done something shameful, our biology goes into action without us having much control over what we do. Our biology dictates that we beat ourselves up, attack others, withdraw, or avoid. These four directions above of the compass come from Donald Nathanson's (1992), work on shame and shame theory. The Miller's wife goes into a reaction formation of avoidance. This is not happening she says to herself, "This can't be. Look at all of the beautiful things that my husband (my impulsive self) just obtained for me. There is nothing wrong with what I just did. I will keep my mouth shut and pretend that nothing bad is happening. If I am quiet, no one will find out." The Miller's wife represents our shameful hidden self that is in too much emotional pain to ever truly be seen. She hides out and lets things go on without intervening.

Questions to help you identify your similarities to the Miller's Wife

1. When have you remained silent when you wanted to speak out?
2. When have you felt completely and utterly ridiculous about a choice you have made, and then tried to cover it up or pretend that it was an okay choice?
3. When has someone else made a choice for you that cost you something of yourself but you kept quiet?

BUILD YOUR OWN EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ENDURANCE (P20)

The Maiden had endurance. Regardless of what happened she continued to move forward. Endurance is not a word that we go, “Yeah, I get to be strong and tough today.” Our usual response is one of dread or fear. Endurance is like an inner mirror. It looks us in the face and says “there are some things that you need to do differently if you really want resolution to this internal conflict.” Often we conclude that perhaps inner contentment, self-actualization, and redirection really aren’t all that it is cracked up to be and our silver hands are just fine.

It is not until we are faced with change that we become so aware of the chatter we hear in our head: “I can’t do that. It will hurt too much. I will never be good enough. I have to settle for less.” The constant chatter is an example of exactly what happens to us emotionally. We get an idea of what we want. It is a very sketchy idea, and that is where it stays in the sketch book of our mind. We never flesh it out. We never create the idea and bring life to it off of the page. We don’t do that because our inner belief system keeps us stuck. And if we think about creating life out of that idea, then we allow depression, anxiety, or fear to stop us dead in our tracks. We accept our ideas as impossible and our life as unfulfilled because we choose too. I know that sounds harsh, but that is the reality. “We always have a choice,” says Pema Chodron (2001).

Now, I did not say that the choices we have, we would like. However, the truth is we disable ourselves every day by staying in our depression, anxiety, or fear. It is not like we are consciously choosing to stay there, but the fog in our brain (the midst at the river confuses us) keeps us immobile. We have to make a conscious choice to become mobile. It is clearly not an easy choice, but in the case of depression, something is better than nothing. A walk around the block again and again, a trip to the library, breathing, guided imagery, anything is better than nothing. Our mental and physical health requires our participation. We can no longer afford the fifties mentality, saying to the doctor, “Fix me, you are the expert.” When we take that mentality, we are participating in the Miller’s mentality. We are giving our power over to the magician that says, “Here, let me make it better for you. When we give away our power we set ourselves up for victimization. So again, we have the choice of staying or leaving.

Life is better for us when we participate in it. Think for a minute about the Special Olympics. Those athletes participate through many difficulties and disabilities. Out of the thousands that participate, only one in each category walks away with a gold medal. Does that stop those that place second, third, or not at all? Do they or other athletes participate in a chosen sport all of their life? No, age creeps in and reduces their ability to win. Life is a cycle and some stages are better than others. That is just reality. It is when we don’t accept the reality of where we are that we choose to stay in our delusions about how things should be in our life. When we allow ourselves to stay in our delusion, wish, or should, we allow room for bitterness, anger, and resentment to grow. We become victims with a victim mentality. When that happens, our physiological body breaks down because our cells cannot tolerate the constant and continuous negative energy of anger, bitterness, and resentment.

Keeping this section short enough for you to stay interested is important. The key to emotional and psychological endurance is to stop feeling sorry for yourself, take responsibility for your life and your decisions, and move forward.