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I have walked the path of my own compulsions of food, prescription drugs, alcohol, busyness, and even some street drugs. It is through my own process of healing that I have learned some ways of working with compulsions that can bring a person to a place of peace.

The core compulsion we have is to struggle. I like the way the author Eckhart Tolle describes this as our "pain body," all the uncompleted experiences we have in our lives that eventually become something that is almost like an entity and if you fight with this entity it will win.

NSJ: If we don't try to get rid of a compulsion, what do we do with it?

MOM: Instead of condemning ourselves, if we can just be with ourselves in the moment and ask, "What is in the moment?" And then add "and this too (i.e., the compulsion); can I honor it as part of my journey?"

We came into this conceptual world, which is the "I am not, I should be" world. People say, "I don't struggle," and I ask them, "Do you rest peacefully at every single stop light?" That is where you can see the underlying current of disease.

Our core compulsion is to try to control life. We have become human "doings" rather than human "beings."

NSJ: Many of our readers are on a spiritual path. Does a person have to be rid of their compulsions before they can pursue a spiritual practice?

MOM: This is the spiritual journey. Compulsions are a necessary survival system that your psyche has used to take care of itself when you have been far away from yourself.

There are two tools we use to survive. One is keeping parts of ourselves at bay and the other is bringing ourselves a deep sense of comfort. Comfort is very important to the human psyche. If we aren't getting it from the

Your compulsions may have something to teach you

sense of ease of being, then we get it from the chocolate éclair, the busyness, the to-do list and all of that.

If you can understand compulsions as the act of turning away from yourself, you will see that there is a part of you needing you. We have to learn how to bring consciousness to the feeling. Let's use the example of someone who smokes cigarettes. Be fascinated about when you are turning to the cigarette. Be curious about what smoking the cigarette is doing for you. You may not understand it then; the answer could come to you two hours later.

— Mary O'Malley

without going to a therapist. They can also do this whether or not they are on a management program. This process works with the various anonymous programs, drug recovery processes, weight loss programs, or other management systems. Many people get involved in the management process without doing this piece of engagement.

The changes don't stick. This is when we see people lose weight only to gain it all back and then some. We have been doing management and this is about engagement.

I call it the dandelion principle. We rip out the greens and

say we have it controlled and then the root grows more. We have to get to the fuel, the emotional part and really embrace and transform what it is that is fueling the compulsion. That is why it is a spiritual journey.

NSJ: I understand you keep a chocolate bar in your life at all times. If you don't need it anymore, why do you keep it around?

MOM: I invite people to not be ashamed of their compulsions. Instead, honor them as a call from your soul to awaken. They are not proof that you are a weak-willed ninny; they are not proof that you are defective. Be curious and your compulsions will guide you and show you what is inside of you that is waiting for your compassionate attention.

People can literally heal the world by beginning to be curious about their compulsions.

A good technique to get started is whenever you find yourself being compulsive, say thank you; thank you for taking such good care of me. This will help you begin a dialogue with the compulsion and to use it as a biofeedback mechanism to discover what you are running away from.

NSJ: Do you think if some of our politicians went through this process they might be less inclined to take us to war?

MOM: Yes. This is the core of this work

and we could do an entire conversation about it. My book really isn't about compulsions. It is about how to use the human mind to unite rather than divide, to connect rather than control. The collective mind that you see on the evening news is the compulsive mind. It hates this and wants that. It is the mind that creates so much heartache, and if you and I can heal this within ourselves, we can heal the world. My message is to heal yourself, heal your heart because this is the piece of the planet that you have been given.

Most people live in reaction rather than in action. If we can learn how to respond maybe we will see we are supposed to go and work in Bosnia or somewhere else but we will do it from our hearts and in a healed manner.

Eckhart Tolle says that if you look you will see that the mind which allowed people to kill one hundred million beings in the name of war is dying. There is a whole new level of mind that is waking up and we are a part of midwifing that. Some of what is happening in the world today is happening so that people will wake up.

NSJ: How can people reach a place of peace about their compulsions so that they can begin to understand them better?

MOM: I invite people to not be ashamed of their compulsions. Instead, honor them as a call from your soul to awaken. They are not proof that you are a weak-willed ninny; they are not proof that you are defective. Be curious and your compulsions will guide you and show you what is inside of you that is waiting for your compassionate attention.

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A Community Publication of
Self-Empowerment, Joyful Co-Creation,
and Thoughtful Earth Stewardship

Trust Yourself

Mary O'Malley Says That by Exploring Our Habits and Compulsions We Can Discover Ourselves

by Krysta Gibson

As I drove down a street on Seattle's Eastside, looking for Mary O'Malley's home, I saw a car that had a bumper sticker stating, "Trust the Process." "This is the house," I thought, "no doubt about it!" Trusting the process of life and one's self is a big part of Mary's message. In fact, the first three words of her book are "I trust myself."

Mary O'Malley is the author of "The Gift of Our Compulsions, A Revolutionary Approach to Self-Acceptance and Healing," as well as being a counselor, group facilitator, and lecturer. She teaches at Evergreen Hospital's continuing education center as well as at the University of Washington's Women's Center.

NSJ: Mary, what is a compulsion?
MOM: A compulsion is any recurring activity that a person uses to manage their experience, around

which they have little or no choice. In my work the word compulsion covers addictions and obsessive-compulsive behaviors. We can be compulsive about anything. The more standard ones are overeating, drinking, gambling, and drugs. There are also hidden compulsions such as making lists, worrying, television, relationships, and the internet.

NSJ: Most people don't see compulsions as a gift. Rather we tend to see them as something to be ashamed of, something to hide, and something to run away from if we can. You see it differently. Why do you know so much about compulsions?

MOM: I know compulsions very well and I know very clearly there is nothing to be ashamed of. I lost myself and I didn't know how to take care of myself. I would not have survived without the numbing that my compulsions gave me.

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Use The Workplace to Evolve Your Consciousness

by Marion Moss Hubbard

Heroism is ever available, and in fact it is through ordinary experiences that the ordinary person can become extraordinary.

—George Sheehan

For most of us, the work that we do for eight hours or more each day plays a central role in our lives. It provides the money that we need to put food on the table and obtain the creature comforts that make life easier and more enjoyable. For many people work is also an important part of their personal identity and social network.

For many years, however, I felt that this perspective of work was incomplete and something was missing about the role of work and how it fit into my life as a whole. From my observations and discussions with others, I realized that something seemed to be missing for them, too. I now understand that the missing piece is an overall context for our work that gives a deeper sense of meaning and purpose to the experience fragments.

This is especially true with the unprecedented change that so many of us are undergoing in our work environment. As the pace of the workplace seems to be speeding up, our

workdays can become very fragmented. We have competing demands on our time and energy. We get bogged down in minute details. We have endless meetings that interrupt our workflow and we are bombarded with more input than we feel we can handle.

Another aspect of our work that can be very fragmenting is what I call compartmentalization syndrome. One compartment contains our work life, another contains our home life, and yet another contains our social life. Without an overall picture, we may lack the key piece that can give our lives a sense of integration, meaning, and purpose. It may be difficult to see how each fragment fits with the core of who we are. And without a core connection, a valuable part that work can play in our lives may be lost.

It is my contention that the workplace, with its labyrinth of experiences, is a heroic training ground, which challenges us to find the personal heroism within to work from the center of ourselves in all that we do. It presents us with a variety of moral, ethical, psychological, and interpersonal tests to see how well we can put our principles into real life practice. From this perspective the workplace helps us gain valuable insight from every situation and person encountered.

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