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The DISTORTED LENS of Charlee's Competition

DISTORTION: "I must win at all costs."

Highly gifted, successful, the woman touting this lens has personal power which attracts followers. Charlee's charisma carries influence which can unwittingly claim victims caught in the aftermath of persuasive charm. After an encounter with Charlee, people find themselves reeling emotionally in disbelief. Although close friends and business associates have observed her in action, they think they will never fall prey to her schemes. She is admired by those she reports to in the business world.

Nevertheless, once Charlee does not need to impress you, you become fair game for an unexpected undermining or attack. Many would fail to identify her delusional schema masks as insecurities. This lens is framed with fear, "What if others were to perceive me as I really know myself?" Being thought of as "number two" is intolerable; which propels her to strive harder, avoiding at all costs

the removal of bricks guarding her pseudo-strong exterior. To do so would reveal - vulnerability, humanity and she is willing to walk over others to transcend humanness.

The distortion for this lens is written in a childhood environment that punishes displays of weakness. She must mount the top rung of a perpetually-lengthening ladder. If unable to achieve results, she becomes dejected internally, but outwardly she becomes vicious with her tongue and schemes. The verbal altercations have been attempts at masking shame-attacks. Alfred Adler postulated, women who exude superiority, in reality, is attempting to overcome a self-perception of inferiority, which, out of balance, can be expensive to others and ultimately costly to self.

In a rare and candid moment Charlee reveals, "I can't seem to help myself, something just comes over me. I see how I drive away my daughters when I flip out. My closest friend tried to provide honest and loving feedback. Instead of accepting her words, I lashed out with venom. I can hardly stand it when I perceive her (my friend) as wiser than me. I think that is why I attack her, she is trying to be helpful, and I recognize her strength. So when she exhibits the characteristics that I know I do not possess, I see red and just lose control."

INSIGHT FOR REFLECTION

Alfred Adler postulated that all behavior occurs within in a social context. Humans are born into an environment in which they must learn how to negotiate for their place in the family. An extremely competitive person usually has something to prove to self or others. In balance, competitiveness is needed as that type of internal motivation drives individuals to become skilled, competent, and creative. However, if it is out of balance and moves into extremes, it can be masking feelings of shame or inferiority. When accompanied by

displays of an attitude to win-at-all-costs mentality, boastfulness, self-centeredness, or arrogance, it is usually overcompensation. When feelings of shame or inferiority manifest internally with extreme and overwhelming urges, a "distorted lens" is created. The distortion usually manifests with thoughts as exaggerated feelings of inadequacy and insecurity that may result in being defensive or anxious.

Women like Charlee are more difficult to understand and like; mainly if you have been the object of her scorn, you may believe that she doesn't have a heart; she does though. If we can understand, usually this type of person has been wounded themselves through various childhood circumstances, and they are preoccupied with their own pain and suffering.

This preoccupation with a selfish-lens, can originate from a child who naturally wanted the love of their parent(s) but discovered through harsh experience that they could not trust their caregiver(s) to nurture the love. Any kind of criticism can trigger their sense of worthlessness. Regretfully, the competitor will do whatever it takes to earn honors, awards, accolades, and praise from others to compensate for the love and dignity that would have been provided by functional parenting. This is a false sense of self-manifestation which is primarily an unconscious protection from the child's harsh environment. This stimulates seeking power over others instead of love, companionship, camaraderie with others. There is nothing dangerous or abnormal about healthy competitiveness, more so, Charlee's case illustrates that when a competitive nature ruins relationships, then introspection of the driving forces behind the cruel behaviors becomes important

The core of these issues creates a pendulum effect. One extreme leads to thinking, "I am worthless." While the other extreme reacts differently, "I will be powerful" so as not be vulnerable. Feeling dependent and vulnerable to another human being is unthinkable.

Everyone has been wounded to some degree, and each of us can find ourselves somewhere on a continuum between the extremes. Some individuals are not able to acknowledge or express their inner truth feeling suffocated with overwhelming emotion; while others are at the other extreme and spew, inflicting the deepest pain on others. Some individuals act infantile exhibiting immaturities; while others exude rigidity, control and performing as hyper-mature. Lastly, individuals can feel the pendulum effect within themselves and experience those extremes within.

REFLECTIONS for DISCUSSION

What does a competitive and insecure person have in common?

What differences are there between a competitive and insecure person?

Which one is easier to be around?

*CoDevelopers of O for the Soul
Joni LeRette Flores
Crystal Anzalone*