

**The DISTORTED LENS of  
Payne’s Powerlessness**

**DISTORTION:** “Others always have it together.”

Payne appears like a tower of strength to those around her. She is very careful to control her life so that she feels safe and comfortable. Because of circumstances in Payne’s childhood, she will not discuss with anyone, carrying around unfinished business and a sense of victimization. She felt that things were happening to her and that she did not have choices or freedom to make decisions for herself, so she rebelled from the family’s religious values, and moved to the West Coast immediately after graduating from high school. She felt fortunate to be taken in by a group of aspiring artists who initially accepted her “just as she was.” She felt liberated and giddy. “Can there really be people this wonderful in the world,” she pondered? Payne made great connections while in California and grew artistically; however, she never earned her bachelor’s degree which leaves her feeling a notch below the professionals that surround her. Although she is equally talented, creates brilliant work, her lack of education is undermining her esteem. Payne believes at some point that she will be undermined by a newbie climbing the corporate rung. “It wouldn’t be the first time...” she agonizes.

An overwhelming sense of low-grade guilt has traveled with Payne since leaving home at age 18. Why do I always feel that everyone else is smarter, wiser and more attractive? This internal monologue wreaks havoc on her heart. “I just wish that I could feel like a real adult for once in my life.”

Powerlessness is not as outwardly obvious as Payne comes across to others as extremely competent. It is a recurring theme in her personality. Her radar is constantly scanning like Doppler to detect the least level of threat to identify any potential perpetrators before they can abuse her. Payne has overcompensated and has a hard time believing within herself that she is in safe (in any capacity). She fears facing a potential crisis or difficulty as internally she does not feel equipped. In fact, she believes everyone else just seems to have it together.

**REFLECTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

How would you counsel Payne?

What defense mechanism is in place with Payne?

What do you think the unfinished business might be causing feelings of Payne’s powerlessness?

What will it take for Payne to realize that she really has developed skills to protect herself?

Does Payne need to be as hypervigilant today as she was when she was a child? Explain.



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