

I always like to start with a joke... but the topic is jealousy, and it's hard to find jokes about jealousy no less ones that don't have some component of violence.

So I thought I'd search for an easier topic to joke about: Unitarians. If you know the answer to this, don't shout it out. And anyway even if you think you know the answer the Unitarian sitting next to you will disagree.

How many Unitarians does it take to screw in a light bulb?

We all know how many Catholics.... 3... but it's really 1

I sent out a query about Unitarians and received this

We choose not to make a statement either in favour of or against the need for a light bulb. However, if in your own journey, you have found that light bulbs work for you, that is fine. You are invited to write a poem or compose a modern dance about your personal relationship with your light bulb. Present it next month at our annual Light Bulb Sunday Service, in which we will explore a number of light bulb traditions, including incandescent, fluorescent, 3-way, long-life, and tinted, all of which are equally valid paths to luminescence.

Last time I was here I felt a deep sense of gratitude. It is an honour to be given the opportunity to speak with you. Last time I didn't have a handle, really, on what the honour was about, but I was listening to an inspirational talk by Wayne Walder, who is pastor at the Neighbourhood Unitarian Congregation in Toronto. He said, "If I do not bring forth what is in me, then what is in me will destroy me."

It was a Sunday morning message he gave on the shadow, that dark part within that we are ashamed of, or afraid to reveal. And so I got that it is an honour to be given the opportunity to share what is inside me with you folks who hold some sympathy for the belief that if we do not bring forth what is in us, it will destroy us.

I'm here to share myself not because there's something special or unique about me, but rather the opposite. I am just like you. On the deepest level we are all the same, and sharing who I am confirms that for both you and me. As Wayne said in that message, we don't want to be lonely. I want to know you and I want to see myself in you, and I believe you want the same.

One of my mentors, Stan Dale used to say "The deeper I look in your eyes, the more I see myself." And I do believe the deeper we can see into each other, the deeper we can BE with each other, the deeper we experience together the universality of life.

I believe to be literally true that we are one, in the 'real' world, the natural, not just the supernatural plane. At our very core, our physical core, at the centre of the nucleus of every one of our cells is our DNA which contains the blueprint, the map, the set of instructions that determines how we are made. And 90% of my genes are the same as yours.

Now I'm going to be talking about my jealousy this morning, and some of you, I know, don't experience jealousy. That's OK. We're still made of the same cloth, I believe, because what I found out in my exploration of jealousy is that it springs from a universal human condition. It is a reaction to a universal human experience. Some of us have a different reaction than jealousy, but it's to the same human experience.

So here we go... Wayne says, "If we want to be whole we need to open the bag which contains our shadow."

What do I hide inside my bag of shadows? What secrets? I was taught not to believe that sex and love were one in the same. I hear it every day, in the media, from friends, in idle conversation. Sex is just sex. Love is special. Love is deep.

But I know now that as I developed, and I developed sexually very early, sex was my deepest expression of love. Sex was... wanted to be... the language of love... for me. This is a core belief of mine that I hid... held in so deeply that in fact was not aware of. You know, there is something dysfunctional about a society that puts sex and violence in the same breath, ("We must censor sex and violence in the media.") But how could I know as a developing child that this is society's screw up, not mine?

I held that, in shame, in anger, in a sense that I was different, for most of my life, until I came in contact with HAI, and Stan Dale who believed that everything we do, everything we are, is either love or violence, and even violence is a cry for love.

So it wasn't surprising that since I would not allow myself to live my core belief, or even recognize it, that confusions of sex and love would undermine my relationships.

And I was in a very low point emotionally in my life when I met and within a year married Gabrielle.

I remember my therapist asking what was my hurry. I told him I was almost 23 for god's sakes. Life was slipping by. I didn't realize in just how many ways I hadn't really started life yet. I didn't know what love was. I remember though that I was happy. I felt as though marriage was going to do something positive for me, stabilize me. Maybe I felt that marriage would somehow help me ditch my heavy bag of shadows, that it would just slip off my back.

My happiness was short lived. Gabrielle dropped the bomb. We were sitting in a restaurant when she said, "Since we're going to be married, I don't want there to be any secrets. I slept with your cousin, David.

The room swayed like a ship on a rolling sea. My heart clutched into a painful knot and I felt sick. There was that unreality like when you have a fever and the world comes at you as though in holograms. I tried to act normal. I picked up my fork, then put it down. It was hard to breath and my heart hurt and I wondered if I would throw up. I had to get out of there. I fumbled for my wallet, put money on the table and stumbled out of the restaurant. Gay followed five paces behind me down the street.

Half my mind was shouting "How could you!", and the other half made excuses. After all, I had practically thrown them together at the very time when I was having sexual difficulties with her. And hadn't I myself been unfaithful later on during our relationship. My throat was paralyzed in conflict. When we could finally talk about it she said she'd felt inadequate, and went to him for support.

I knew that the manly thing was to forgive her, to rise above it. And I tried. I was too ashamed to call off the wedding. But our marriage was over before it even began. We were divorced within a year.

The worst thoughts, like a pocketful of moths eating away at the fabric of my soul, were remembering times I spent with them while they knew and I didn't. That was a humiliation too cruel to bear.

Why did she have to lie? Why leave me in the dark for so long? The answer, of course, was obvious. I was far too jealous to be trusted with the truth. She knew she'd lose me by telling me. I guess she hoped the marriage would keep me. It didn't.

By the time I left my relationship with my first wife it was clear that jealousy was ruling... and destroying... my life. It undercut my sense of self worth and my ability to love. But worst of all it forced me to live in secrets and lies. This was my strongest motivation to deal with jealousy. I realized I couldn't have honesty when I placed untenable demands on my partners. How could I set my partners free so that they wouldn't have to lie? It was obvious that to make that kind of space for them, I had to dive into my jealousy.

There are only two ways to deal with jealousy. You can read all the self help books and Cosmos and Psychology Todays you want, but there are only two. To avoid the triggers or to dive in. Most of what we're taught is avoidance.... avoid mates who are promiscuous, make agreements, make commitments, make vows, make sure you satisfy

the other's needs, ... all meant to avoid jealousy, avoid whatever kinds of incidents that trigger it. My nature was too conflicted to ever be successful at avoidance.

I chose highly sexual women for partners. They were the symbols of the power of my manhood. Yet I made it clear, without actually saying so, that I was a very jealous person who could easily be destroyed. I extracted an unspoken agreement of exclusivity (which I myself would not honour), and, most of all, I insisted on honesty (although I wasn't). In other words, I chose naturally unfaithful women, and insisted that they be faithful or risk losing me. AND ... I insisted that they not lie about it. Hello?? I practically guaranteed I'd be lied to.

You would think it would be obvious but it took a long time for me to cotton to the reality that my shadow was screaming to be let into the light, and that if I continued to deny it, it would destroy me.

Wayne says, "The hero's journey has always been to go into the darkness to find the treasure." So I did.

It didn't happen over night. It took some 20 years. You could say I was a reluctant hero. Along the way I gained an ally in my crusade, something I've talked about lat time I was here. ... putting faith in the teaching that everything I do and feel, all my shadows, originate in a beautiful place. I described to you once how it came to me like an epiphany that a furious anger I held for my mother was nothing more than a cry for love.

By the time I had this epiphany, this shattering discovery about my jealousy, I had already released one shadow I had judged and hidden. I recognized myself as a non-monogamous person. And I knew, hard as it was to live up to, that I would never be at peace with myself if I held my lover with a possessive grasp. I needed a partner who was truly free to be, if for no other reason than she wouldn't have to lie about herself. But more fundamentally than that, I was coming to recognize that love, for me, is a room we share where we are free to be.

And in that space of freedom which I created... I thought I would die of jealousy. My fear, my anger, my paranoia, the withering blows to my sense of manhood. Thoughts... ugly thoughts, painful painful thoughts snapping at me like jackals.

And let me tell you, it was a very very lonely place. Everyone, everyone around me, including my lover, was either denying their jealousy, or dealing with it by avoiding the triggers, or were simply and truly oblivious to jealousy. They would become furious with me for being jealous. They'd say I had no right. They'd say it was my fault....

I was the only person I knew who had chosen to go after it. It seemed as though no one understood me.

The only island of association was a psychodrama therapy group which met once a week in a large padded room above a grocery store on Yonge. The sessions could only be held when the store was closed because even with the padded walls and gym mats on the floor, sounds of screams and blows would drift downstairs, frightening the customers.

Whenever my turn came to work, I would choose a person to role play my partner, and another to play her lover. It's amazing how once these group mates begin to speak and act in their roles, how easily I fall into actually seeing my partner and her lover.

At first I had nothing to say to them. I could only feel the great pain of jealousy. I would fall apart in anxiety, literally dropping to the floor, drained of energy. I would leave the therapy studio each evening with all the thoughts to stifle my shadow. "I have no right." "After all, we're in an open relationship." "She says she loves me -- I have no reason to doubt her." "I brought this on myself. It's time for me to grow up, get over it." And blah and blah and blah. Each week I would return to the group and try again. As the sessions continued I eventually learned to stay on my feet and get through my shame. I spoke with them. I expressed the fears and doubts which blocked my forward momentum. I confessed my belief in my inferiority, my insecurity. Expressing these feelings helped dissipate them so I could get at my anger.

It was about my fourth session with jealousy that I could finally plant myself firmly and pound my fury with the plastic bat onto the giant pillow. I let my pounding give rise to words and shouted them at my partner and her lover. I don't remember what they were. Surely they made no logical sense since there was no logical justification for my anger.

It was the next session that the epiphany happened. The earth didn't move. There was no explosion, no lightning bolt shot out of the sky. It happened very quietly and quickly. But it was an epiphany, a sudden realization that seems to drop from the sky. As usual I had selected two group mates to stand before me. The giant cushion was placed between us and I took the bat. I looked at them. As usual I saw not who they really were, but my partner and her lover.

But suddenly they became neither themselves nor my partner and her lover, but my mother and father.

I saw the faces of my parents superimposed on those two characters. They looked at me. I could not speak. I was dumbstruck.

In that instant my life changed. Suddenly I knew my jealousy was not about my partner but my parents, not about today but yesterday, that each crisis was just a trigger of a far more ancient, infantile trauma. I stood at a turn in the road where I could see that the meaning of jealousy lay not outside, but back into myself, and way back into my past.

At that critical moment I received a precious gift. In my imagination I created my partner and had her stand beside them as if she had stepped out from behind my parents. I could see her in a clear, brilliant, jealousy-free light. For that moment at least all the angry distrust and fear-ridden doubts lifted like a veil from my eyes. In fact, I saw the truth not only of my partner, but her lover as well.

And whom did I see with this new sight? Surprise surprise. I saw two people just like me, frightened just like me, driven just like me, innocent and beautiful just like me. I had always known that when I am attracted to someone new, it does not alter my attraction to my partner. But when my partner is attracted to another my jealousy always cries out that it must be because there's something wrong with me. I could now see that whatever the problems in our relationship, they were ours, and not brought about by the love of someone else. For the first time in my life my relationship with my partner was not predicated on other relationships.

My bouts of jealousy didn't disappear after that epiphany. But now I could begin to identify them as triggers of something else. Over time my jealousy led me to discover that in my bag of shadows is a little baby terrified of being abandoned. Letting the baby out of the bag and giving him a voice lets me nurture him and bring him back to love. Over time this frightened baby led me to discover that jealousy is a cycle of behaviours, fear, anger, recognition, repair, forgiveness, a cycle that begins and ends in love.

I'm still a baby. I still get jealous. I now have a tool enables me to condense the cycle into shorter and shorter circles spending less and less time out of love, and more time in it.

End by saying A few years ago I paid a visit to the Thomas Edison laboratory in south Florida. It houses many of his inventions, flasks and test tubes, fords and tires. It is in an old barn, and hanging from the beams are lamps that are lit still by the very lights he invented, with filaments that have never burnt out, in bulbs that have never been changed.