ON MY MIND

by Michael Brady

LET US TALK ABOUT THE INNER CHILD

My wife, Linda Brady, is currently completing her signature work on the inner child titled **Through the Eyes of a Child-The Ultimate Guide to Parenting Our Inner Child**. So, I decided it was time I wrote about my own experience with my inner child.

In 1985 I was working part time in Psychiatry as a psychotherapist and part time at home as a past life regressionist/wholistic coach. Linda was tuning into wounded inner child work and started to talk to me about it. When I began to tune into this with her, I held it as an interesting and useful “construct” like the psychological constructs I studied in school. I conceived of my inner little boy as a creation of my imagination in my own unconscious mind. I thought this was a useful way to tap inner emotions from childhood. And a useful way to create a separation of unresolved emotions from childhood from my current emotions as an adult. I held what I was doing this way for a few years as I developed my little boy and my relationship with him. Brother was I wrong!

When I was a six-year-old, my birth mother Lorrain died of pneumonia on my birthday. That is right, on my birthday! She was in one hospital in Baltimore, MD. and I was in another hospital. My mom had chronic lung problems and was in and out of the hospital several times during the last year or so of her life. My Aunt Mary took care of me and my brother for days to weeks at a time in my fifth year. We would go live with her, my uncle, and my unmarried Aunt Helen at my grandparents’ house. When my mom died my family managed to have a funeral and burial while I was still in the hospital. I came home the day after the funeral. There was nothing different to tell me something had happened. I have no memory of anyone telling me of her death before I came home to my Aunt Mary’s house. In fact, I was home for two or three days before I found out that mom had “gone to heaven”.  I have no memory of my older brother saying anything to me about mom dying then or ever. I have no memory of my dad ever saying anything to me either. I do have a direct memory of my Aunt Mary telling me of her passing.

My brother was three years older than me. So, he went off to school and I was left in the care of Aunt Mary each day. It was just me and her in the house. I remember being with her for several days where she was sad or quiet or weepy. She would often tear up or cry whenever she was interacting with me. I was confused those days. My radar told me not to ask why she was crying. I remember and believe on the third day this happened. Aunt Mary was sitting at the kitchen table doing something. I think she was darning socks. I came up to her and asked for a glass of milk. She turned to look at me and teared up. She held my gaze and spoke to me with her eyes. They said, “I am about to tell you something and you cannot react. If you do, I will lose it”. She then proceeded to tell me that mom had gone to heaven. I asked if that meant that she was not coming home. She said yes. I said “oh, okay”. Then I said, “can I have a glass of milk”. And we moved on with the day. I did not cry, that day. I did not cry the next or the next or the next. In fact, I did not cry until I was going to sleep one night when I was eleven years old!

That night when I was eleven, I began to grieve my mother’s death. I had been holding my breath, so to speak, all those years. My mom was my safe harbor when I was young. She was always there when I needed her. I now know my dad came back from World War 2 with post-traumatic stress syndrome. When I was a little boy my dad could be irritated by things I did, that were normal exploratory behavior. One day when I was around 4-years-old, I reached for an ashtray that he was using, and he came at me angry and loud. He scared me. My mom was entering the room at the time. I remember backing into her protective embrace as she reminded my father, I was just a little boy. So, my dad was not a safe harbor. My brother was not a protective older brother. When mom died, I was effectively left to be raised by the wolves I called family. Yeah, they took care of me. But I had to watch that I did not get bitten in the butt at the same time. In psychological terms. At six years old I began to repress all my emotions and was stuck in unresolvable grief….for years. That night as an eleven-year-old I cried alone. I now know that grieving is meant to be a shared process. That is, crying with at least one other human being is required for a heart to heal from the pain of losing someone. I was twenty-three years old before I cried with someone over my mom dying. My little boy inside was lonely, isolated, and felt like he did something wrong. He felt like something was wrong with him, but he did not know what. This was in fact what caused me to be interested in psychology when I started college.

 In 1985 I started to construct the following inner child named Mikey…but wait, I need to share something else first. When I was nine years old my dad remarried. My stepmother Rose served as my mom as I grew up. I accepted her without any emotional resistance. Rose was a good intentioned person and nervous most of the time. She was not able to be a safe harbor as my mom was. One day when I was fifteen years old, she showed me a photo album containing a few pictures of my mom. I picked one out to keep. It showed me sitting on my mom’s lap at Christmas when I was five years old. I was wearing a Davy Crockett outfit (with the sleeves and pants legs rolled up for growing room!). I had a coon skin cap on and was holding a half-eaten candy cane. I was smiling from ear to ear. My mom looks worn out and older than her years, but she is smiling also. Even my dad looks happy in the picture. This is just three months before her death. My birthday is March 16.  I carried that picture around in my wallet until I was nineteen years old.

At nineteen I was in the Navy preparing for active duty. While in a huge boat storage building, I lost my wallet in a boat my class was working on. I was convinced someone in my class had found it, removed my meager money and thrown it somewhere in the hanger or outside in a large field. My class instructor even lined everyone up and offered no recriminations if the wallet showed up by the end of the day without the money. Well, that did not happen. I remember standing outside the hanger that day, looking at the field and thinking my most valued picture was out there somewhere. I was heartbroken. When I was twenty-nine years old that wallet (minus any money) came back to me in pristine condition. Some new sailor taking the same class in the same boat hanger ten years later found my wallet in a compartment on a stored boat in the Naval Shipyard! He then took the initiative to go to personnel, get them to track me down and personally mail the wallet back to me. I considered that an extraordinarily good deed. The Christmas picture with my mom was intact in pristine condition in that wallet! I had it laminated and carried that picture in my wallet for another ten years. At that point, the image had faded so much as to be barely discernable.

I had dreams of my mom while I was growing up. I had her come to mind at certain times when I was distraught. I would talk to her at times, like we pray to God. I had a sense of her presence off and on until my late thirties. Even though she was physically absent from my life I felt her presence and protection while I was growing up and into my thirties.

In 1985 I started to construct my inner child named Mikey.

I saw him as that five-year-old in the picture with mom.  I began to call him up in my mind each day and give him a hug in the morning. I told him he was a good boy and that I love him. I would hold and rub and pat until I could feel my heart and his heart relax. This would lead to a safe warm loved feeling. I created a place in my unconscious mind I call the Sanctuary or the garden. It is a door in my mind. On the other side of the door is a world. It is a magical world. In that world you can swim in the land and walk on the water. You can fly through the air or instantly transport yourself from place to place. Here in the garden, manifestation is instantaneous. If you wish for something, it appears. Hand in hand we created the perfect world for Mikey when I am away in this world taking care of grown-up business. In this place he is reunited with his mom. He is reunited with his dad and he is not damaged by the war anymore. Mikey has a dog he loves. He has a tree house to live in. He is healthy and free to run and play all day. Mikey is happy and safe and feels loved all the time. He feels parented by me now. He feels unconditional love from me, and I am both good father and good mother to him. His heart is not broken anymore. Because of this relationship I have with him I can be open hearted and trusting in ways that were difficult for me earlier in my life.

 I only began to learn to ski when I was thirty-six years old (1988). Somewhere in those early years of skiing something amazing happened. One day I was skiing down a slope that was deserted except for me. It was early in the day. The snow conditions were perfect. I was going fast and feeling in control without any fear. Suddenly, I heard someone behind me scream YAHOO. You hear that kind of thing around you every so often when you ski. Some people cannot help themselves. I am not one of those people. This yahoo was so big, I slowed down and glanced back to see who had yelled. The entire slope above and below me was empty. I looked around in the tree line and groves. I saw no one… Suddenly, I realized that the yell, that sound, had come out of me! As I continued downhill, I felt the physical separation between myself and Mikey inside. I realized that Mikey had yelled. Mikey was experiencing the pure joy of flying down the mountain on a pair of skis. I was tagging along with my inner child’s joy. I could feel joy in him and the joy in me. That was the beginning of Mikey being more than a psychological construct. That was the beginning of realizing that he was there. I DISCOVERED HIM. I DID NOT MAKE HIM UP. Today my relationship with Mikey is as real as my relationship with my wife or my biological son.  This article became more involved than I anticipated. So, watch for Part 2 next month.