

# The Dark Side of Wealth

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### Understanding Children of Wealth

It is no social secret that having wealth can provide a person with status, power, and open the doors to acquiring education and polish. If the rest of a person is attended to by maintaining healthy moral and personal values the wealthy person will generally have a strong enough inner world to sustain their core needs for belonging, self esteem, contribution and love.

In this case, wealth can be a great blessing. The biblical adage so often repeated in old wealthy families:

*to whom much has been given, of him much shall be required*

is not only about doing good in the world but a sort of life line that can help a wealthy person connect to the world in which they live in meaningful ways. But when wealth subsumes according to Dr. Norman Rosenthal the self and substitutes for what we need on a deep, human level; it can become a Faustian bargain.

### Identity Issues

Children of wealth often begin life with prescribed identities and a sense of social and financial superiority, they are targets for jealousy and often seen as a success by their peers simply for being born where they are born. This can make it difficult to form a personal identity. The world that their family likely inhabits socially comes with an already established set of rules and expectations that the child of wealth is tacitly expected to buy into.

And having too much of everything can undermine personal dreams as well. They may reason that they deserve no more and have no right to extended personal success. They may give up their dreams before they get a chance to even formulate in their minds. Who are they to want anything when they already have so much? And, on the other side, why should they go through the tedious and frustrating experience of being on the bottom when they are already at the top?

But it is often just this experience of being a worker among workers that the child of wealth needs and craves. Self esteem is built through mastery of many small and large challenges, not simply inherited. In wanting to prove themselves not necessarily as better but as good enough the child of wealth encounters the same fears of failure that any person trying to succeed does, though in their case, the stakes can feel much higher. What if they try and fail?

What if their deep fear that they can't create a success equal to what they have inherited is confirmed and their guilt over being handed a life and shame at feeling

they both don't deserve it and couldn't do it for themselves is correct? What if the shadow of the family founder is just too long and they never find their way into their own patch of sunlight? They may reason that it's better not to try, to opt to become professional rich people, where their entry level is already assured. But the kinds of professions valued by the family founder may be the last ones the child of wealth might want to undertake.

They may have already seen and felt the loneliness of being unimportant in the eyes of the founder who may value money above all else and they don't wish to repeat this pattern so professions that seem to perpetuate this pain can repel this child. And they have probably already experienced the dark side of wealth, the pain behind the apparent pleasure.

### **Wealth and Addiction**

In cases where addiction has been part of the home, these children know what it is to live in a world that looks good but feels bad. Then wealth, addiction, pain and alienation become fused in the mind of the child. The riches that surround them, mock them, as the disparity between the looking good outside and the pain filled inside expands; as wealth promises so much but cannot compensate for what is missing or mend an aching heart.

In this scenario, money all too often comes to be used as compensation, a way to buy a temporary pleasure to ward off pain from a missing real pleasure and fill an ever increasing inner void. This can undermine any healthy relationship the child of wealth may have had with money. The privilege it brings sours along with everything else. If money can buy anything, why can't it give me a sober mother or a father who wants to spend time with me? Why, when we are so fortunate, so well dressed, live such a comfortable life is my family filled with such distress?

If a divorce is added to the mix then the alienation often deepens. An already fragile system gets stretched beyond it's capacity to hold together. Divorce, along with addiction and relational disconnection, is "deeply fragmenting to the limbic system". *Rosenthal (199\_)* or the part of the brain/body that records our emotional lives. The limbic system sets the mind's emotional tone, filters external events through internal states (creates emotional coloring), tags events as internally important, stores highly charged emotional memories, modulates motivation, controls appetite and sleep cycles, promotes bonding, directly processes the sense of smell and modulates libido. *Amen, (1998 )*

Our neural networks are not easily altered, "early emotional experiences knit long-lasting patterns into the very fabric of the brain's neural networks, (*Lewis (2000 )*), changing that matrix calls for a different kind of medicine all together. Our emotional life is physical, it imprints itself on our bodies.

When we have problems in our deep limbic system they can manifest in “moodiness, irritability, clinical depression, increased negative thinking, negative perceptions of events, decreased motivation, floods of negative emotion, appetite and sleep problems, decreased or increased sexual responsiveness or social isolation”, says Amen.

It is caring and connection, not money, that creates a limbic system that promotes calm and emotional health. When the limbic system is damaged, reaching for a drug or a drink to “calm” it or “stabilize” it is an all too common form of self medication. This is one way that the disease of addiction makes yet another sinister turn through the next generation.

### **Spending as a Gateway Drug**

Spending can all too often become a gateway drug. Money is used as a mood manager. But when we use money to fill our basic needs for love and belonging or to regulate our inner states, we are setting ourselves and our children up to do the same, to look for quick fixes to shift moods, fill emotional or spiritual voids or get a sense of belonging and connection.

This is becoming not a phenomenon of wealth but, unfortunately part of our material oriented American lifestyle. But, like any substance, we build up a tolerance. We refine our tastes, we increase our capacity. And our ability to hear the voice of our inner world and respond to it can decrease as money; spending and its trappings occupy an ever increasing part of our lives and psychology. The perfect looking life that money can create comes to feel like a necessity rather than a privilege. It becomes an identity, a way of being in the world; in short, it becomes who we are. We can become dependent on a substance to regulate mood, fill an inner void and provide us with an identity.

And this can mean we weaken our mind’s and body’s capacity to control our inner states. There can also be the binging/purging cycle so common to eating disorders, spending to relieve emotional pain or receiving an addicts “guilt giving” and then being emotionally starved.

Our neural system carries with it our emotional sense memories from childhood. How we grow up imprints itself on our brain/bodies creating a template that we work off of for a lifetime. When we train ourselves to solve internal conflicts with external buy offs or to reach for synthetic solutions to problems of the mind, heart and spirit, we set up a pattern that opens the door for addictive lifestyles.

### **Characteristics of Children of Wealth**

### Guilt and Shame vs Self Indulgence

The child of wealth may carry deep guilt over their privileged status in life. They have grown up feeling different from their less wealthy friends, called "rich-kid" names or looked to chip in extra when paying the food bill or the bar bill. They have been seen as lucky and successful, connected to the kind of power and privilege that our society values as the ultimate prize and the most significant of all accomplishments. These kinds of shallow values, seeing the acquisition of wealth as the end all and be all, can deeply confuse the child of wealth who may already be paying an internal price at feeling different from other kids.

With the bewildering, conflicting feelings superiority and inferiority and an identity that doesn't feel like his own the child of wealth may take refuge in a self indulgence that is designed to take away these warring feelings, nagging fears about the future or feelings of alienation and insecurity.

When addiction has been present, this child has endured mind and heart numbing swings between emotional deprivation and over indulgence.

### Entitlement vs Feeling Undeserving

Entitlement is one of the most commonly cited qualities of the child of wealth (though it can emerge with equal force at the opposite end of the social spectrum). Things have always magically appeared for the child of wealth with or without effort on his part and his family money has generally provided him with layers of service that grease his path through the world and remove frustrating obstacles that others have had to learn to cope with and accept. This can become a habit and an expectation that gets layered onto many situations. Building a career or a relationship, for example, requires frustration tolerance and doggedness and a willingness to start at the bottom, an experience that may not be familiar for this population. Instead of walking through the "personnel" door, the child of wealth may want to start close to the top, which, in fact can put them at a disadvantage because they don't build the confidence that is gained from climbing up the rungs.

On the other hand he may reason, I have so much I don't deserve to want any more - I will foreclose on my own dreams. I will play small so people won't hate me; I'll be self deprecating and hold my wants back so that no one can point a finger at me and call me over indulged. The sad truth here is that the child of wealth doesn't allow themselves to be as big as they naturally are, they hold back and stay beneath the radar so that they won't feel over exposed. They play small and withhold their own desire for success. Sibling order may play a role here, perhaps the first follows the family founder and the second or third look for other roles.

### Hi Profile vs Hi Isolation

Children of wealth oftentimes have access to a social status that carries a certain amount of high regard in worldly terms. Doors are open to them that might be closed

together. Positions on boards, memberships to clubs, and entrée into social situations is oftentimes a natural part of the life of wealthy people. This allows them an assumed level of social status, a social profile, so to speak. The child of wealth may have led a life buffered from the real world by layers of "caretakers". The wealthy person may spend much of their time surrounded by people in their employ, people over whom they have hiring and firing power. They can become both very dependent on those who serve them and feel unable to function without them, have an unnatural advantage in the relationship, or both. This can be a distorting experience in terms of learning how to "be" in a normal relationship where the power in the dyad is fairly evened out.

Wealth also affords one to live in a sort of splendid isolation. Wealthy people can afford to live in exclusive worlds apart from every day people. Deep feelings of disconnection from others, not feeling "normal" like other people, feeling marginalized from the rest of the world can simmer beneath the surface for this population. Then, as they feel disconnected and lack the natural security gained from feeling "part of the gang" from belonging, they may erect defensive walls that further isolate them. This feeling of disconnection can be a traumatizing experience that is cumulative over time.

Addiction is traumatizing and trauma victims tend to feel different from others and often isolate themselves in their own private worlds of pain. The combination of the isolation that follows wealth and the isolation that accompanies trauma can be a double whammy for the child of wealth from an addicted family. This becomes a vicious circle in which the more isolated the one becomes the more difficult re-engaging is and the more difficult re-engaging is, the more isolated one becomes. This cycle can deepen pain which can lead to a desire to self medicate with drugs, alcohol, food, spending, sex and so on.

#### Low Frustration Tolerance vs Not Knowing What "Normal" Is (Issues Around Regulation)

Children of wealth may not have had to learn to wait to get what they want, they may have had too much too soon and too much too easily. Because they have not had to put off getting what they want they have trouble delaying gratification. This is a set up for addiction as the drug mirrors this cycle, supplying a high, a calm or a quieting of inner turmoil with no effort or exertion of will.

On the other hand they may have learned to tolerate anything and everything from demanding, perfectionist, narcissistic family founder who has probably asked for constant adulation and given very little of himself in terms of time, support and care. The child of wealth may have a great deal of trouble with boundaries and regulation because they have not had the usual limits and constraints that a normal budget would impose. There may have been a constant flow of money while at the same time their parents were busy buying out of parenting turning the job over to hired people. The

children may have been over indulged with things while feeling starved for love and time. They had too little of some things and too much of others and lacked a sense of what was normal to want or expect.

The combination of feeling both over valued and under valued simultaneously can leave them feeling torn inside. In addition their other parent may have been an addict wrapped up in their own disease with little to give the children, alternating between being a monstrous parent and making over the top attempts to compensate with things and intrusive attention.

The intense swings between being under gratified and over gratified, starved and over fed, emotionally, physically and materially create a very weak sense of what normal is.

#### Low Self Esteem vs Grandiosity

The child of wealth may feel that nothing they can accomplish will ever match the huge accomplishment of the family founder. The founder all too often values making money above any other accomplishment, seeing money as strength, power and the ultimate success. Family founder tends to have their own identity, they came from behind, they made it while the child of wealth is always living up to an identity other than their own, a family identity or the identity of the dominant person. This may or may not fit for them and their natural personality. In addition, the wealthy family may tend not to value professions that don't lead to wealth or a high profile.

All of this can undermine the self esteem of the child of wealth. And people worship other people with money, money in our society buys anything - houses, cars, clothes, social status, spouses, friends. These are the people who tip big, pick up the check and donate to causes, schools and museums. The child of wealth and addiction may opt for the easy way of feeling good about himself, depending on what his wealth can buy rather than what he can accomplish on his own. He may become grandiose as a defense against darker emotions that threaten to protrude into his consciousness.

#### High Expectations vs No Expectations

The child of wealth can be caught in a painful bind between feeling the pressure of succeeding in larger than life terms, trying to reach an ever heightening bar of success and having very little expected of him or her. This tends to be the child who has a summer program rather than a summer job, who has no practical needs that drive them to work. Getting a job and contributing to one's life in needed and practical ways can be a real source of self esteem for any growing person. The fact is that the child of wealth does not have these needs, whatever he will earn as a young person will probably be less than he has easy access to through his parents. And if addiction was present he has likely swung between emotional abuse and over indulgence. And children of wealth have often been a part of a family that has unusual focus and discipline.

Fortunes aren't made by magic and family founders are often among the most disciplined of society and scorn those who aren't. They can also be ruthlessly competitive as illustrated by the well known problem Thomas Edison had losing in any game to his children, even when they were very young. This is not a normal sentiment for most fathers and can leave children confused about what it's normal to expect of those close to them and themselves.

This means that both parents and children will need to find activities that are meaningful for other reasons. The freedom to choose can be both liberating and overwhelming. Busy hands are happy hands as the old saying goes. All of us need to feel that we are making a meaningful contribution to the world in which we operate.

#### Helplessness vs Perceived Powerfulness

The child of wealth has often had many situations in life handed to them. They have not had to put up with the initial stages of getting something started for themselves, getting a job or starting at the bottom. They have had housekeepers who wash their clothes and pick up their messes and gardeners to mow the lawn and other kinds of help that has removed them from many daily tasks that others have to cope with in order to take care of themselves. As a result, wealthy people may actually not know how to take steps to organize their lives that others take for granted. And their relationships with people may have been limited to socializing rather than networking, for example. They may also lack a certain aggression in career paths because they didn't need to be so. The learned helplessness that accompanies trauma can exacerbate the helplessness of the wealthy client and immobilize them.

At the same time, wealthy clients may feel they are entitled to special treatment, that they shouldn't have to go to twelve step meetings like other people or get "down and dirty" in recovery. Identifying with addiction may not appeal to the wealthy person who has wrapped much of their identity around a special social status. They are used to having other people do things for them and they may want or expect other people to get them well, too. They may want it to happen easily or quickly, to be provided with crib notes on recovery so to speak. This can frustrate clinicians who are aware that addiction is basically the same for everyone and doesn't get fully better by itself.

#### High Bottom vs No Bottom

Life's necessities, earning a living can be natural boundaries that set off alarms that others, at least, respond to when they fall apart. But for the person with wealth that boundary is often removed. There is no bottom. The need to earn a paycheck may not exist and bills get paid whether the substance abuser is using or not and parents can "buy out" of parenting buy hiring others to do their job. This can mean that the wealthy person or parent can become extremely sick and addicted while outward appearances continue to be maintained, at least well enough. The wolf never gets to the door. The child in this circumstance suffers deeply.

While to the outer world she may seem fortunate, the inner world of her family is falling apart and she is living a split identity. In the absence of the kinds of constraints that would bring most families to their knees, this family lives with a wound that never heals, a constant low level of desperation. Often while smiling to the world in which they operate which has the effect of making them feel unseen as they really are or that she is living a lie.

On the other hand this is also the family who has access to the best resources money can buy and the wit and savvy to use them which, when they can reach out for help, gives this group an excellent prognosis. It does require, however, that the family, addict, enabler et al, come to the humble realization that they have fallen prey to an illness that is bigger than they are, in short, that in spite of their wealth and status, they are really no better or different from anyone else.

### **The Family**

When too much wealth flows through a family system small daily pains and annoyances can be skillfully removed from day-to-day living. Unfortunately it is these small frustrations that often teach us to develop what psychologists call "frustration tolerance" which eventually translates into an ability to tolerate larger frustrations. Little of worth can be accomplished in life without an ability to tolerate frustration whether in the work place or home. Developing a meaningful profession, tolerating the ups and downs that are a part of any intimate relationship and having the stamina to take care of children all require an ability to tolerate frustration.

And when an over abundance of wealth flows through the family system family members don't learn how to regulate the ever liquid substance of money so poor affect regulation may become a family problem. What is too much or too little? They don't learn what normal is. This lack of ability to regulate can generalize to all sorts of areas liquor, food, spending, sex: how much is too much?

And remember the shadow side. Parents may act out on their guilt around having money through depriving themselves and those around them as often as they indulge them. Couple this with the true and real deprivation of attention and caring that a child of wealth may experience from parents who have hired people to put in the on the job hours of parenting, while they themselves make cameo appearances, and the pain of the child is significant.

In this case she is asked to tolerate too much frustration, too much unrequited yearning, too much loneliness for the attention of the parent she needs. This further blows her frustration tolerance circuits. And if the parents are providing things in lieu of time the child is learning one of the primary lessons of addiction, I can kill my pain, at least temporarily, with something outside myself - bring on the mood regulators.

But the real truth is that this child needs for consistent regulated attention from those she loves (namely her parents) are not being met. Her deprivation is all too real.

But the catch 22 is that though the people to whom she most wants to matter may feel out of reach, the outside world is telling her that she is lucky. The world loves money. And so she is ever more deeply confused as to what she really needs and how she can realistically set about getting it. Add to this that she feels both undeserving and over entitled and you have a potent cocktail for inner turmoil. Bring on the substance, take away the pain - and do it NOW and do it BIG.

In an unconscious attempt to externalize painful self-concepts and disturbing emotions the wealthy/addicted family may create a target person or scapegoat. It can be a child or a spouse or both. This person, for whatever reasons, is vulnerable to internalizing the negative side of the family traits. This opens the door to being the family "scapegoat" or the embodiment of the tension and alienation that the wealthy, looking good family is uncomfortable allowing to surface.

The secondary gain for the scapegoat is that they may feel gratified getting even this kind of dysfunctional attention and it can become an identity, a way of meeting the world. The confusion and anguish that this child carries coupled with the inability to make sense of what is going on or receive validation or support for their reality may lead them to self medicate their pain with drugs, alcohol, food, sex etc., which will further identify them as the "problem".

You may recognize here areas where our entire society has become deregulated, worshipping money above all else and buying out parenting are too common in today's world. But it is wise to keep in mind that many of these qualities are over determined, that is a client who exhibits these characteristics will do so for many reasons not just one. It is dangerous to pigeonhole in an attempt to make things easier to understand.

### **Relational Issues**

This population is used to getting what they want, when they want it, whether it's good food, services or things. Personal relationships are a different story, however and the wealthy person can find themselves confused with the dynamics of intimacy. Friends, spouses and children are not employees, they don't collect a pay check and don't like receiving a bulleted list of tasks and objectives. Though the person of wealth cannot fire blood relatives they may fire them emotionally if they become too demanding, preferring the types of relationships where they are more in control, less challenged and feel more "appreciated". This can especially be true of the person who holds the purse strings; why should they endure interpersonal demands and disappointments when the rest of the world writes them thank you notes, gives them awards and does what they're told?

On the other hand, there is always what psychologist Carl Jung referred to as the "shadow" or the part of a person that is the submerged opposing aspect. The same person who feels overly entitled and impatient can have a shadow that feels small and anxious; they may feel guilty and out of balance and can yearn for someone to depend on, to put them in their place and feed them emotionally; the shadow side of the demanding part, where feelings of being insecure and undeserving live. On the other end of being controlling is feeling out of control and on the other end of feeling over entitled is feeling under entitled. In personal relationships wealthy people may tolerate too much, their guilt allows other people to use them and take advantage of them.

They tend to have a hard time feeling entitled to personal boundaries, they have trouble saying no "No" I am doing too much of the giving here and "yes" I will compromise and release control. Their guilt and shame around having gotten too much too easily immobilizes them and their issues around regulation keep them from knowing what is. They dare not ask for more and they feel undeserving of more while simultaneously entitled to the superior treatment they have always had.

And in their growing years, some children of wealth have spent many or most of their time with employees, people who were paid to care for them, who had shifts and could be hired and fired. This can make the most consistent relationships in a child's life, i.e. the parents, somewhat distant and formal while they learn skills of intimacy from their primary caretakers, who may not be parents. Being raised by the help can open the door to anything from neglect, abuse, emotional alienation, wonderful bonds with down to earth people, having an unnatural edge over authority figures to being under the direct authority of and spending the bulk of your time with people who come and go. These are not the best ways to learn skills of intimacy.

Socially speaking, wealthy people may feel both superior and marginalized, or out of the main stream. This is often missed as the wealthy person seems so lucky or prominent but underneath may feel different and like they don't belong. This crazy making split between feeling like a highly valued member of society because of your social status and different from the general population can be exacerbated if there is trouble at home. Feeling undervalued in the family system or by the family founder can lead to a cognitive and emotional dissonance. It can become a cumulative trauma the pain and confusion of which the child of wealth may eventually self medicate. The child/spouse can't normalize their conflicting feelings, which makes the world feel unsafe. They know where they fit in as an extension of the family founder or high achiever but not where they fit in as themselves. Who are they separate from this powerful person that the world admires? And because they can't find "normal" they have trouble with personal and professional boundaries. Because they have money they don't feel deserving of wanting more or charging for their services (and other people may also resent paying them for their services). All of this resurfaces in adult relationships.

### **A Target for Jealousy and Transference**

Another issue that the wealthy client may face is the clinician's own counter transference issues when it comes to money. Without a therapist understanding this, the client is at risk of being shamed, misunderstood or hurt by a clinician who is projecting pat answers onto their client and projecting their own unresolved money issues onto a vulnerable person in need of help. This can be very traumatizing for a wealthy client.

The client who possesses wealth can be a target for transference and counter transference in other ways, too. In a group, for example, those who might be struggling financially may experience envy toward the wealthy group member. The envy might express itself in excluding the wealthy group member from cliques, criticism about things they do in group or put downs that are covering up jealousy. The therapist who has their own unresolved issues around wealth can act out their counter transference by colluding in this non preferential treatment unconsciously, putting the wealthy group member in a vulnerable spot. Counter transference on the part of the therapist may be an all too common impediment for the wealthy client to face in their course of treatment giving them yet another confusing issue to face.

There may be a tendency on the part of others, whether fellow group members or therapists, to want to see wealthy people as unhappy, snobby, spoiled or superficial as a way of mollifying their own jealous feelings. Somehow it makes it easier to tolerate feelings of envy if we can see the person possessing wealth as in some way miserable or "paying a high price" for their privileged status. The idea that they have something we just don't have, much as we may wish we had it, is easier to swallow if we devalue it in some way.

Recently I become aware of two cases of therapists acting out with their wealthy clients in hurtful ways. One is a therapist who called an old client who had previously spent six years in therapy with him and asked him to float him a loan or bail him out financially. The other is a therapist who asked his client to put him up for membership in his client's social club.

### **A Set-up for Addiction**

#### The Secret That Everyone Knows About; There's an Elephant in the Living Room

The no talk rules around money make wealthy people feel that they're carrying secrets. Needless to say this is an elephant in the living room since everyone clearly sees their wealth along with all of its accoutrements. This sense of separation may add to a client's feelings of not belonging. The family who has kept addiction or wealth "secret" along with the feeling of living outside of the norms and ordinary rules of much of

society may set the child of wealth up for the lifestyle of an addict which tends to be secretive, outside the norm and rule breaking.

Money, for the person who has devoted their life to acquiring it, or wrapped their developing identity around it, can become the equivalent of a primary substance; that is we can't imagine a life without it. Any time something outside of the self becomes more primary than what's inside a person a dependency can develop. An over-dependency on money and its trappings can lead to looking for other types of external regulators like drugs and alcohol. And remember spouses and children have often gotten money instead of love, time, caring and support they have learned how to use money to salve their hurt feelings and satisfy their longings. But this only works for a while, eventually the self has to be reckoned with or dependency deepens.

Having trouble tolerating frustration or delaying gratification, the child or spouse of wealth may reach for a substance rather than do the tough personal work it will take to confront internal pain and confusion and build healthy self esteem they may self medicate which can make all their wealth oriented symptoms gets worse e.g. more shame vs grandiosity etc. It's tough to become a worker among workers in recovery, on one hand the wealthy person feels not as good as the workers after all they didn't have to work hard. On the other hand they have to give up feeling better than others because of belonging to a special "club" of people who dress more tastefully, are more sophisticated, and often better educated. (or they feel they will have to give this up). Actually they may be well served to reframe and claim these qualities as personal attributes and accomplishments, after all their education and exposure to a broader world, if that is the case, is a positive thing and can set the stage for a productive and interesting life.

### **Self Esteem**

Self Esteem is built through how you are seen by those around you and how you're able to accomplish what you set out to accomplish. Wealthy people's children seldom hope to accomplish what the founder accomplished and consequently their self-esteem can suffer. Also remember the founder may tend not to value their accomplishments either as their value system may be focused on large scale success as the end all be all, further low self esteem they are not held in esteem by the person they wish most to be esteemed by so they don't internalize that feeling. Self-esteem is also tied to the quality of our personal relationships. All too often wealthy parents "buy" out of parenting consequently the child of wealth does not feel as important and valued by their parents as they need to in order to feel good about themselves.

They were not the center of their parent's world, necessarily; money and looking good may have been more highly prized in their family system, which can become another set up for addiction. And children of wealth may not really understand how to go about starting out on the bottom and working their way up. Much has been handed to

them as if by magic and little, on a practical level, may have been asked of them. In his confusion and inability to carve out a personally meaningful role that he can figure out how to achieve and can be esteemed in the family system, this child may simply give up and do what is at hand indulge in everything from too many clothes to too many drinks.

His lack of regulation may kick in here and too many can easily mushroom into a full blown problem where he finds himself drowning not only in wealth and it's accoutrements but in what is meant to be it's antidote. Already addicted to the primary substance of wealth which he may feel incapable of living without (his nightmare, his worst fantasy) he may develop the same relationship with drugs and alcohol or continue a relationship with substance already modeled within the family.

Having often times been offered things, programs and paid companions in lieu of attuned attentiveness; having been given stuff to buy off deeper yearnings for caring, time and esteem from parents it becomes an easy segue to use drugs and alcohol as mood regulators, esteem builders and bonding agents with other people, providing a sense of belonging and camaraderie; drugs and alcohol, the great equalizer. The children treat themselves as they have been treated giving themselves things or substances instead of time, support and caring. They may feel both under entitled and fearful about going after their own success and overly entitled when it comes to starting at the bottom and working their way up.

Their shame and guilt at already having too much can prevent them from allowing themselves to go after more. Here again America's love affair with money hurts the child of wealth. If we valued the kind of professions that are not all about earnings but contribute richly to society the child of wealth could enter them with their dignity and dreams intact. But we seem to be valuing bigger as better, the "super" model or athlete, the movie star and "Daddy Warbucks" are all cultural icons that make going for the gold seem more important than having a happy, balanced life. Again our superficial and materialistic values rob the child of wealth who may have much to contribute, of many honorable paths toward that contribution.

In working with affluent clients who have been addicted or lived with addiction remember that addiction is an "equal opportunity disease", and so is a wounded spirit or a broken heart. The disease of addiction reduces anyone to a degraded status because the drug subsumes the person and in the case of those who have lived with it, the drug has taken over the family relationships and dynamics as well. No one escapes from the long arm of this disease. Maintaining the kinds of boundaries that are part of recovery and twelve step work is very useful to the wealthy client who may need ordinary rules to feel secure and learn self regulation.

Recovery involves a renewal of the spirit, connecting with others on an emotional level, sorting through distorted thinking and fully processing the grief associated with the losses of addiction. In addition a full and working knowledge on the part of the clinician of PTSD symptoms and how they manifest in this population is an important part of healing.

The emotional connections that an affluent client makes in recovery will be as sure a magnet drawing pain to the surface and cleansing emotional wounds as with any other person. And the twelve step programs will work their communal magic, creating a container of connection, support and spiritual renewal. And research finds again and again that it is quality of the relationship between client and therapist that emerges as the most primary part of the healing process. Clients internalize, slowly and over time the positive regard, caring and support of their therapist and fellow group members. This serves to rework negative internal object relationships and introjects and repattern a deregulated limbic system.

The full approach of twelve step work, group therapy and one to one therapy over a period of several years has been, in my own clinical experience, what changes lives. Short cuts don't hold because they don't result in this deep repatterning though they may offer very useful insights and in some cases profound spontaneous healing. But healing needs to be supported by a strong and available enough container to hold the intense, powerful and sometimes overwhelming emotions that come up through deep grieving and reliving traumatic of moments.

*One to one therapy allows for the deep reparative personal connection that mirrors the parent relationship, group therapy brings up the family in which transferences a, family roles, yearnings, strengths and weakness emerge and twelve step is a sort of society in miniature, where clients can learn new ways of being in the world, adopt a design for living, have a constantly available network of support and develop a spiritual philosophy. A network that puts us in touch with a wealth of a different kind, one that can be carried in our hearts and minds giving life purpose and meaning.*

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