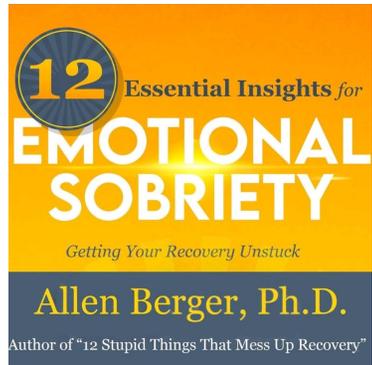


12 Essential Insights for Emotional Sobriety



Allen Berger, Ph.D.
Author and Clinical Psychologist
Clinical Director of The Institute for Optimal Recovery
Recent Book: *12 Essential Insights for Emotional Sobriety*

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Author of "12 Stupid Things That Mess Up Recovery"



Fritz Perls, M.D. - Founder of Gestalt Therapy

"...*maturing* is the *transcendence* from environmental support to *self-support*. (p.28). "

Fritz Perls (1969). Gestalt Therapy Verbatim.

*“Emotional sobriety is a process that transcends a consciousness of **emotional dependency** moving us towards a consciousness of **emotional freedom.**”*

Allen Berger, Ph.D. (2022)

*In order to transcend our emotional dependence we must become **aware** of how our behavior is **determined** by the gravitational forces created by this “almost absolute (emotional) dependence.”*

Allen Berger, Ph.D. (2022)

“...If his arrangement would only stay put, if only people would do as he wished, the show would be great. Everybody, including himself, would be pleased. Life would be wonderful.”

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Step 12



“Our demand for emotional security, for our own way, had constantly thrown us into unworkable relations with other people. Though we were sometimes quite unconscious of this, the result had always been the same.”

*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, 1952
- 1981.*

What were the results?

- ◉ Disillusioned - nihilistic
- ◉ Disappointment
- ◉ Frustration
- ◉ Anger
- ◉ Anxiety
- ◉ Depression
- ◉ Hopelessness
- ◉ Controlling
- ◉ Pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization
- ◉ Sober suffering
- ◉ Relapse

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Consciousness of
Emotional Dependence
Creates an “It’s All About
Me” Syndrome

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The "It's All About Me" Syndrome

- We make everything about us - because our emotional wellbeing is dependent on how others think and feel about us, we are hyper focused on the way they treat us and how we think they feel about us.
- The more interdependent we are, the more we will take what they do personally.
- This creates what Dr. David Schnarch called "a reflect self-image." The meaning we give to the behavior directed toward us creates a reflected sense of self.

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Signs of this Syndrome

- Other validated self-esteem.
- I am OK if !!!!!
- Disrespect for differences.
- Believing that the way someone is behaving is a reflection of how they feel about us [we refer to this as a reflected sense of self].
- Protecting others from our feelings or thoughts - thinking they can't cope with an authentic relationship.
- Blaming yourself for the behavior of others.
- Attempting to control the people in our lives.
- Mind Reading or intrusiveness [telling others what they think or feel].
- Attributing disappointment to "being punished by God."

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Virginia Satir, Ph.D.

"We are always trying to get out of our **emotional jail**.... Mostly we try by begging, threatening, or pleasing other people, **trying to get them to do it for us.**"

Consciousness of "I am OK if (fill in the blank)"

- Unenforceable rules run rampant in our relationships.
- We consciously and unconsciously manipulate our partner to do what we want them to do.
- We put expectations on our relationship to meet all our needs and to make us whole.
- We love immaturely - our love is based on need not choice.

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12 Essential Insights for Emotional Sobriety - Allen Berger, Ph.D (2021) Insight #4

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Knowing It's Not Personal





"Taking things personally means we assume that things other people say and do (or don't say and don't do) are about us rather than them. We all take things personally. It's a hard habit to break, but a habit that must be broken if we are to achieve emotional sobriety."

*Allen Berger, Ph.D. (2021) - 12
Essential Insights for Emotional Sobriety.*



*"Our **dependency** makes **slaves out of us**, especially if this dependency is a **dependency of our self-esteem**. If you need encouragement, praise, pats on the back from everybody, then you make everybody your **judge**."*



Drs. Miriam and Erving Polster

*"If our **freedom depends exclusively on another person allowing it**, we **lose** our own sense of the **part we must exercise in protecting and defining our own psychological space...**"*

*Erving and Miriam Polster, Ph.D.
Gestalt Therapy Integrated: Contours
of Theory and Practice (1973).*

“Personal importance, or taking things personally, is the maximum expression of selfishness because we make the assumption that everything is about ‘me’.”

Don Miguel Ruiz, *The Four Agreements*.



“Taking things personally is a function of low self-esteem. Our low self-esteem makes us very focused on and concerned with the approval or disapproval of others.”

Allen Berger, Ph.D. (2021) - 12
Essential Insights for Emotional Sobriety.



*“In this way, emotional dependency creates a **reflected sense** of self (David Schnarch), meaning we believe the other person’s behavior and attitude toward us is an accurate reflection of who we are rather than an expression of who they are. We see in their actions and statements a reflection of our worth or value. We view their behavior as a mirror in which we see a reflection of our worth or value — their approval or disapproval of us. We lose sight of who we are because of what they say or how they act..”*

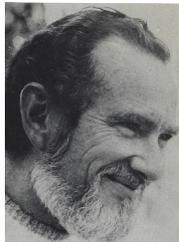
Allen Berger, Ph.D. (2021) - 12
Essential Insights for Emotional Sobriety.



The Cure: How to not take things personally.

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“It is not possible for me to relate to others intimately and allow (and enjoy) their full expression of themselves if I have not discovered how to do this for myself.”



Dr. Jerry Greenwald (1975). *Creative Intimacy: How to break the patterns that poison your relationships*. Simon & Schuster: NY.

“We must not allow other people’s limited perceptions to define us.”



Virginia Satir, Ph.D.



Dr. Murray Bowen

“The individuality of well differentiated people is developed to the point that they can be responsible for themselves and not fault others for their own discontent.”

Dr.s Kerr and Bowen. The Family Evaluation.



Dr. Michael Kerr



Nothing anyone says to us or how they behave towards us is personal. They say and do what they say and do because of who they are not because of how they feel about us.

Allen Berger, Ph.D. (2021) - 12
Essential Insights for Emotional Sobriety.



“Instead of taking what others are saying personally, we need to ask ourselves, “What am I learning about this person?”

Allen Berger, Ph.D. (2021) - 12
Essential Insights for Emotional Sobriety.

"You are never responsible for the actions of others; you are only responsible for you. When you truly understand this, and refuse to take things personally, you can hardly be hurt by the careless comments or actions of others."

onDon Miguel Ruiz, *The Four Agreements*.

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"Nothing others do is because of you. What others say or do is a projection of their own reality, their own dreams [expectations]. When you are immune to the opinions and actions of others, you won't be the victim of endless suffering."

Don Miguel Ruiz, *The Four Agreements*.

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As you stop taking things personally "...you won't need to place your trust in what others say or do. You will only need to trust yourself to make responsible choices."

onDon Miguel Ruiz, *The Four Agreements*.

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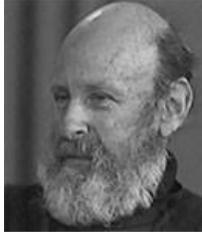


Not Taking Things Personally Protocol

- Depersonalize the energy - remember it's not about you - it's about them.
- If you begin to feel reactive or defensive:
Remind yourself that what they are saying or doing is not about you, it is about them.
- Ask them questions so that you can develop a deeper understanding of their felt experience.
- Do not problem solve - allow them to explore their feelings and repair themselves.
- Soothe yourself if you begin to feel anxious.
- Own your experience.
- Try to put yourself in their shoes, empathize.

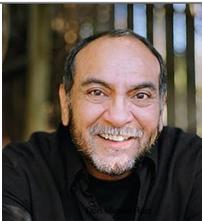
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*"In order to be more **personal** in a relationship, you need to stop **taking your partner's behavior personally.**"*



Walter Kempler, M.D.
Personal Communication (1985)

"When we really see other people as they are without taking it personally, we can never be hurt by what they say or do."



Don Miguel Ruiz, The Four Agreements.

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