

DETROIT NATIVE SUN

Enlightening the Community

The Patching Crew

By Ma'at Seba
SUN COLUMNIST



While driving down the freeway, I noticed that traffic was slowing down ahead of me. As I got a bit further I saw flares on the road and a big yellow truck with a lighted arrow blinking on its back end. As I passed the truck I saw 4 workmen sticking shovels in the back of another truck and getting asphalt. They dumped shovels of asphalt into all the potholes that were in the pavement. The potholes were all different sizes from small and shallow to large and deep. The workers filled the holes and left them humped up with not much concern as to the efficiency of their tasks. Due to the extreme fluctuations in seasonal temperatures, potholes seem to be a dreaded yet expected phenomenon. The potholes will be filled in time and time again, year after year, and ultimately the road begins to look worse than Swiss cheese. Eventually the road will be stripped down to its foundation and repaved anew.

As I drove past the last truck, I began to think about how we all have emotional potholes. Emotional potholes are events, situations or experiences that happened in our lives that left us feeling angry, guilty, resentful, deceived, grief stricken, lonely, unappreciated, inadequate, hurt, disrespected, abandoned, fearful etc. Our potholes usually start at a very early age, and usually grow wider and deeper with time, which is the result when the cause of the pothole is not resolved. Some examples of emotional potholes are: the loss of a loved one, your achievements or efforts are not acknowledged; your mate has had an affair, being teased as a child, feeling unattractive, experiencing physical or sexual abuse, feeling like you never "fit in", feeling like you aren't smart or intelligent enough, etc.

The biggest problem with emotional potholes is that people don't know how to repair them. In an attempt to repair them, people typically resort to trying to fill them in. Filling a pothole in is ineffective and temporary at best. Some of the most obvious signs of filling in potholes are: increased or excessive eating, craving or eating sweets and other pleasure foods, increased to excessive sexual activities, gambling, pornography, increased to excessive alcohol and/or drugs, smoking, unnecessary or excessive shopping or spending money, multiple failed relationships, looking for another relationship before the current one has ended or immediately after a breakup.

Attempts to fill in an emotional pothole are attempts to feel good or better, and unfortunately it will never work, the only way is to permanently repair and repave it. Repaving your emotional road will be a process that will be achieved over varying periods of time specific to the issue. For instance, it might only take you moments or hours to make peace within yourself about losing a family heirloom, than you would at the death of your mate or child. There is no time table for emotional healing because we all process our emotions differently, what is most important is the willingness and ardent desire to change your life and to live in peace and happiness.

Before you repave your emotional road, you must:

- Strip it down to its foundation by-
 - 1) First dissecting your feelings and identifying *what* you feel in any situation that evokes those strong emotions within you (such as "I feel lonely and abandoned")
 - 2) Then ask yourself *what* or *who* makes you feel that way ("My husband")
 - 3) Ask yourself *why* you feel that way ("Because he works all day and when he comes home he just watches sports")
 - 4) Repeat #3, ask yourself *why* you feel that way ("Because he doesn't spend any time with me and he ignores me")
 - 5) Repeat #3 again (Because he treats me like my father did, my father never paid me any attention")

The real issue has nothing to do with your husband, your emotional pothole developed with your relationship, or lack thereof, with your father. Now you have just stripped down to the foundation of your emotional road. This is where feelings of loneliness, abandonment, inadequacy, rejection, anger, resentment and fear began to first develop. These feelings will *unconsciously* arise and be the underlying cause of future challenges from adolescence into adulthood, creating larger and deeper potholes in the many experiences and relationships throughout life. These potholes could cause a person to not strive to reach their goals and dreams and live their passion for fear of inadequacy. Or, to unconsciously sabotage a relationship for fear of rejection and abandonment. Or to gain weight to satisfy the resentment, anger, fear and feelings of loneliness which have intensified over time.

Stripping down to the foundation of your emotional road is called *Self-Analysis*, or introspection. *Healing from without always starts with healing from within!* This is why in ancient Kemet (Egypt) the axiom "Know Thyself" was the primary focus in the schools of higher learning. To truly know anything, including yourself, you must do critical analysis, considering all possibilities. The journey of Knowing Thyself or self-discovery will be a lifelong one. Throughout your experiences and challenges in life, at the end of every day, reflect on what happened and how you acted or reacted. Were you pleased with each situation and outcome? Were they harmonious and peaceful, and if not, could you have handled things a little better? Was there chaos and disagreements? Instead of looking at the other person's role, *look only at how you reacted or responded*, focus on *why* you acted or responded that way. *These are not the other person's potholes, they are yours.* Go back to steps 1-5 until you strip down to the foundation of your emotional road.

Now that you have stripped down your road, it is time to repave it. When a road is repaved, special care and attention is taken to make sure the foundation is solid and free from all cracks and debris. If you lay fresh pavement over a cracked and rocky foundation, the new pavement will be uneven and eventually create new potholes.

- Repaving your road begins with:
 - 1) Being completely truthful and honest with yourself while doing steps 1-5, *without blaming anyone for anything* (including yourself)
 - 2) Acknowledge that there is a part of you that needs to be healed
 - 3) Make the decision to want to change and heal that part of you
 - 4) Acknowledge your actions or inaction's regarding the situation that needs resolution
 - 5) Analyze your role, actions or inactions (*not the other person's*) and then assume responsibility for your role and actions or inaction's
 - 6) Find *Forgiveness* towards yourself and/or to the other person regarding the situation
 - 7) Discover what your life's lesson within the experience was (i.e. to begin to love and value yourself, to stand in your power, that you are not a victim, that you can achieve anything that you set out to do, that you do not need validation, etc.)
 - 8) Release the experience with no blame, judgments, negative feelings or emotions attached to the situation

The process of stripping and repaving is not necessarily easy because of the level and intensity of the emotions that will arise. Praying before you begin is extremely important and helpful. Some people might need the assistance of a spiritual advisor, or a trained counselor to assist them through this process. Regardless to which method you choose, the ultimate goal is to eventually drive down a smooth even, newly paved road with no potholes in it!

Goddess Ma'at Seba is the founder and facilitator of *RELATIONSHIP FIRST AID*, a program which uses spiritual principles as the tools to identify and resolve the causes of unhealthy, toxic or stressful relationships. Ma'at can be reached at: Relationshipfirstaid@yahoo.com.

The DeMarco Project Speaks: Military related trauma in children

By Kim J. Clark Aka Expanding Love
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This article showcases the importance of the military parent addressing their service-related issues so that they are better able to aid their children in *their* healing process. This writer had the honor of interviewing Sgt. Khalil Abdullah (retired). He is the father of Aaliyah Abdullah, who has secondary Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Aaliyah's story was featured in part two of the three-part series entitled "Military Related Trauma in Children." Khalil has diligently taken the necessary steps to be a positive role model and supportive father to his two daughters, Aaliyah and her older sister Khalia.

Khalil comes from a line of military servicemen. His grandfather served in World War II and his father was a Vietnam Army veteran. Khalil is the third of nine children and is a man who never wanted to disappoint his parents. He has followed in his father's footsteps by being a man with high moral standards, strong values, and is dedicated to his family.

As a young man, he wanted to attend college but kept running into financial obstacles. At the age of nineteen, he decided to join the Navy and served four years. During that first year, he married the woman who was to become the mother of his children. Unfortunately, they lost their first child during the pregnancy but went on to parent two daughters.

Life was good for the young family. However, to overcome financial struggles, in 2003, Khalil decided to join the Army Reserves. This was the beginning of the end of their family. Khalil came home from work one day in January of 2004 to find his wife crying while holding an envelope. The envelope contained an airline ticket and a letter indicating that Khalil's reserve unit had been activated. He had two days to get his affairs in order. Khalil was deployed to Iraq. He and his wife were devastated.

He did not feel that he had been trained for combat duty. In Iraq, he sustained a back injury and was given a shot and had to continue with his military duties. Over time the injury caused an issue with weight distribution as he walked. Eventually, his right hip deteriorated and because of overcompensation of weight distribution on the left side, he received a prosthetic left hip.

When he was discharged in 2006, he was a changed man, and in many ways

it was not for the better. When he came home, he was numb. He did not hug his children. He felt very distant and thought everyone was against him. Unfortunately, like so many who serve, his marriage did not survive. He was having issues in the workplace that were putting his job in jeopardy. Because of the issues, it was recommended that he attend therapy to save his job. Being the responsible person that he is, he scheduled an appointment with a therapist. In the first session, the therapist indicated that he thought Khalil had PTSD. Of course, this upset Khalil and he told the therapist not to label him. When he went home, he looked up PTSD. As he went over the symptoms, he realized they applied to him. He discussed the situation with a friend who is also a veteran and followed all the advice his friend provided.

Over the years Khalil has had multiple therapists. He stayed with a couple of them until they retired. He has permitted himself to walk away from inexperienced therapists or therapists whose personalities were not a good fit. Fortunately, for Khalil, when he got in therapy, he listened to the advice his therapists gave him. He was instructed to practice interacting with his family and to learn how to hug and kiss his children. Eventually, he remarried and has moved forward in an incredibly positive way in his life.

When Khalil realized Aaliyah needed therapy, he immediately moved to action to help his daughter. He participated in therapy with her, cried with her, and loved her through the pain. Khalil and his daughters continue to work on their relationship and their healing process. He is immensely proud that over time, Aaliyah has been able to articulate her feelings in a clear and authentic way. It has always been important for him to be a man whom his daughters would be proud to introduce as their father. If you could see Aaliyah's face when she talks about her dad, you would know that he has accomplished that mission.

The interview with Aaliyah's father wraps up the three-part series regarding military-related trauma in children. We at The DeMarco Project, strongly encourage traumatized veterans to seek help for their families as well as themselves. As evidenced by the Abdullah family, we believe there can be a happy ending for the families of traumatized veterans.

Kim is the mother of a veteran who loved his country and was willing to lay his life down for the freedoms he believed in. She is the Founder and CEO of The DeMarco Project, a non-profit organization. Her life's mission is to save veteran lives and improve the quality of life for traumatized military service persons. If you would like to support her in the work, donations are welcome. Visit the website: www.TheDeMarcoProject.org.



Sgt. Khalil Abdullah
Soldier



Dad Khalil and Daughter Aaliyah
Hanging Out in the "D"