Mental Dandelions

*Liberate Your Inner Lawn from Invading Thoughts*

By Jane Meyers

If we’ve had a lawn, we’ve had dandelions. Some of us have pulled them out right away and kept our lawns mostly clear. Many of us have procrastinated and watched the speed with which they’ve taken over our lawns. It’s much the same when it comes to our minds. When an attitude, behavior or condition crops up (what I think of as mental ABC’s) we can deal with it immediately or ignore it, but—guaranteed—we won’t confine it to a single dandelion. With lawn care, if we want to prevent that dandelion from returning and bringing friends, we have to get deep into the earth and grab the root. It’s exactly the same with those ABC’s. They are surface manifestations of underlying problems.

In my business, I see ordinary people who are plagued by weeds they don’t like, that cause problems in their lives, and resist their efforts to treat topically. I help them get to the roots. I’ll share a few examples….names and details changed to protect the innocent, of course….just to give you an idea of how this works.

Joe is 29 and in his first serious relationship. He has an attitude that’s on the reserved and stiff side and a behavior of withdrawing without notice when he gets anxious. As you can imagine, his girlfriend is not enthused about this behavior, and he feels both guilty and lonely when he isolates. We were exploring the importance of touch and where he had experienced it or not. Then we deepened the conversation through hypnosis to get to the root of the matter. Hypnosis is so amazing because it takes us places we would never imagine when we stick to analyzing problems. Here’s what happened.

He first recalled a scene when he was about 17 and was in the room where his sister’s dog was dying. This dog was a golden retriever but everyone was sure he was part Samoyed because he had wild wolf-like behaviors—like eating rocks. Joe recalled feeling anxious and as he tuned into that emotion he sensed a hallway in thin air…a passage to another reality. Despite his anxiety, I encouraged him to wander down that hall. That’s a benefit of imaginary exploration—no risk to your material body.

As he went down the hall, his form shifted and he became a young boy who barged into an expansive, unoccupied room. It was large but empty. He ran around flicking on light switches. As he did, the room began to change. He was occupying it. He created multiple attic –like lofts connected to one another by rope ladders. They were ready made for a boy’s explorations. He was having fun but then stiffened. “I’m not supposed to be rambunctious,” he said. The dandelion roots went further down.

As he focused on the taboo about being rambunctious, he recalled, with shame, a time in second grade when he was telling a story to the kid in the next seat and got so demonstrative he even banged on the desk. “Cool it!” the teacher said sternly. Joe shoved that wildness down. Then he remembered going to the grocery store with his mother. Carts were really made for speed and he was pushing his pretty hard—right into his mother’s heels—multiple times! She wasn’t pleased. Then he thought about growing up in the Mormon Church and the importance of good behavior and reverence—quite a challenge for a boy like Joe. This led him to a memory of a time that a group of kids got done with their lessons before the grown ups and started running around and playing hide and seek in a basement area that hadn’t been sheet rocked yet. Even though he wasn’t the kid that got “busted”, he overheard and internalized the scolding.

The takeaway from this session was that Joe was so concerned about minding his manners and controlling his wild man-child energy that he got exhausted and needed to withdraw. He was ever vigilant in relationship because he couldn’t trust himself to behave correctly since acting on instinct was taboo. It seemed safer to keep his hands to himself, lower his voice and avoid too much interaction. But this did not provide safety and it certainly did not foster loving connection. To have an intimate relationship, we have to put our whole selves in—even the part that might want to eat a few rocks!

Brian is 38 and a small business owner. He came to see me because the attitude of anxiety was cramping his life outside of work. On the job he was intense and focused, but once he left the anxiety took over. He felt like he needed to stay on top of everything—or a customer might be disappointed. He had behaviors that wer causing problems. He wasn’t sleeping, his stomach was in constant knots, and he found he was doing fewer and fewer activities that he enjoyed. He never seemed able to maintain a relationship because he couldn’t relax and make time for one. Under hypnosis, we explored why disappointment seemed like something to avoid at all cost. This dandelion root was a big surprise.

Brian returned in memory to being age 13. He was sitting on the couch in his mother’s apartment and he had a major attitude. He didn’t care about anything. Shortly after this he got into bad behavior with drugs and unhealthy friends. What started all of that? A major disappointment.

Brian was sitting in that apartment because his parents had just divorced and, in the process, had to sell their home in the country. He was one of those kids that didn’t come inside until bedtime, who loved the creeks and the trees and the critters. He lost his whole world when they moved. Even though Brian was fully aware that he had moved and hadn’t liked it, he hadn’t been connected to the pain of the loss and was completely unaware that fear of such pain had followed him to work. Now consciously aware, he could see that a customer’s disappointment was not an end of the world event. Afterwards he experienced a dramatic shift in his ability to relax.

One final example involves Kate, a woman in her mid-fifties who had a condition that was a big dandelion. She was unemployed, and had been for a very long time. She needed to get back to work and had tried every avenue she could think of. As we worked together, we systematically uprooted one dandelion after another, dealing with her life experiences and the attitudes and beliefs she had formed as a result. 10 weeks after we began, we explored through hypnosis why she still thought she would not be chosen.

Kate saw a picture of herself at age 7 wearing a scarf on her head. She told me sadly that she had worn this scarf for a whole year because a pretty girl said Kate’s hair was ugly and stringy. We dug a little deeper to find out why she was so influenced by the girl’s cruel remark. This led to memories of her parents’ voices. When she was happy, they’d say “Wipe that smile off your face!” When she was sad, they’d say “I’ll give you something to cry about!” Kate grew up not trusting herself to know anything. She’d have to take someone else’s word, someone prettier, smarter, or older. I asked Kate to imagine herself as a baby in a basket with her light shining brightly from it. In that deep state, she was able to connect with the true beauty and value of her essence. The very next day she received a call saying she was the top candidate. Two weeks later she had been hired for what she considered a dream job.

If you are stuck with attitudes, behaviors and conditions that are creating dandelions in your life, recognize that you can’t eliminate them by telling yourself to stop, anymore than mowing the flowers will prevent them from growing back. Instead, begin questioning how this got started. Only when the root is gone will the problem really disappear.

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