

About Inner Bonding by Emily Agnew

Inner Bonding© is a six-step process for healing anxiety, depression, addictions, and painful relationships. Margaret Paul, Ph.D., and Erika Chopich, Ph.D., developed Inner Bonding together and published their first book about it, *Healing Your Aloneness*, in 1990.

Inner Bonding helps you become a Loving Adult to your Inner Child. Your Loving Adult is the “bigger You” that wants to take responsibility for yourself and learn about yourself in a compassionate way. Your Inner Child is the core aspect of you that includes both your unique, innate talents, and essence qualities and your wounded child selves that developed to cope with pain and challenges:

The Six Steps of Inner Bonding

- Step One:** Be willing to feel your feelings
- Step Two:** Move into the intent to learn
- Step Three:** Dialogue with your inner child and wounded selves
- Step Four:** Dialogue with your higher wisdom/ guidance/Source
- Step Five:** Take loving action
- Step Six:** Evaluate the action

Inner Bonding includes a key step that sets it apart from other inner child practices: Step Four, where you dialogue with your higher wisdom. To enter into this dialogue, you must in your Loving Adult.

If you become merged or identified with a wounded part of yourself, you are not in your Loving Adult. This means you are cut off from your higher wisdom. So you could say that Inner Bonding is about creating inner alignment to support your spiritual connection to your higher wisdom, which in turn helps you heal and release old, painful patterns.

Inner Bonding gives you an elegant, powerful conceptual framework to make sense of and improve your relationships with yourself and with others. Seen through this lens, patterns or reactions that have perplexed you suddenly make perfect sense.

At the core of Inner Bonding is the principle that you are either in the intent to control, or the intent to learn. You can be in either intent with yourself inside, or with others.

More about the intent to control

Our every word or action in life is an attempt to meet our needs: this is true for all human beings. Let’s imagine for a moment that you are my life partner. In that case, then naturally, there are lots of needs I’d like to get me with you. This isn’t

inherently a problem. But it is a big problem if I believe you should be the one to meet those needs, or meet them all the time!

If I believe you are responsible for meeting my needs, I will inevitably try to control you. I might do this overtly, with anger, guilt, shame, or blame, or covertly, with niceness, compliance, and “giving to get.”

The problem is, I can't control you! And my attempts to control you will make you resist or resent me.

The more I try to control, the more tense, angry, anxious, or depressed I will get. Control leads to a downward spiral. It is the root cause of all addictive behavior. Addictions are an internal attempt to control three core feelings: our helplessness over others, the personal loneliness we feel when we are cut off from ourselves or have no one to share love with, and the spiritual, existential aloneness we feel when we are cut off from our Source of higher wisdom.

What control looks like

Let's return to the scenario in which you are my life partner, and you work at an office, while I work from home all day and am completely stir-crazy by 5 pm. You come home from a long day out, ready to vegetate on the couch. How do I react if I'm in the intent to control?

I might get angry and say, “You're no fun, you never want to go out.” I might blame you: “It's easy for you to say--you've been out at work, but I've been stuck inside here all day!” I could try making you feel guilty: just heaving a sigh can convey volumes. Alternatively, I might turn on myself, trying to control my own disappointment and helplessness: “I shouldn't go out when my partner doesn't want to. A good partner wants to be with their partner, no matter what.”

You can see the problems this creates. If you submit and go out with me, you'll feel resentful. If you don't, you have to deal with my anger, blaming, and shaming. Either way, we're not set up to enjoy ourselves or each other this evening. If this kind of interaction continues over time, it will seriously erode our relationship.

More about the intent to learn

Fortunately, there is a way out of this spiral. We can choose to move into the intent to learn instead of to control. When I move into the intent to learn, I acknowledge that I (not you or anyone else) am responsible for seeing that my needs get met.

This doesn't mean I can't get my needs met with you or with other people. It means I honor the reality of your choice in the matter. And I accept my ultimate

helplessness over your choice. I can influence you, but I can't control you. It means I give up trying to control you—or anyone else—to meet my needs.

What the intent to learn looks like

Let's revisit our scene above: once again, I've worked at home all day and I really want to get out go to the movies tonight, but you are too tired. How might I react from the intent to learn?

Before I could hear you with compassion, I'd probably need to turn to my own disappointment with compassion and curiosity. I check with myself: am I willing to stay home to be with you? Would that be the most loving choice? Or do I so strongly need to get out of the house, that I will end up feeling resentful if I stay?

As I go through an internal dialogue, I might turn within and realize I have a belief that it's wrong for me to go out without you. In that case, I can ask my inner guidance for the truth of this belief, then ask what action might be loving in this situation.

Whatever I choose to do, the key choice is my intent: in choosing the intent to learn, I take responsibility for my feelings, needs, and choices. The more I do this, the more I can connect to my Inner Source for truth and loving action. Instead of feeling helpless, lonely, and alone, I will feel more and more empowered, joyful, energized, calm, happy, strong...all the good stuff.

Emily Agnew completed her Inner Bonding certification in 2009 after assisting Margaret Paul in several Inner Bonding intensives. Luminos Listening programs incorporate key Inner Bonding principles to help you build a rich inner relationship, a sturdy, flexible personal infrastructure, and a strong connection to your Inner Source. To learn more, visit www.luminoslistening.com/services.