

Peak to Peak counseling



Disarming the ego

By Amy Skinner, MA, LPC, NCC, ACS, RPT-S

Bruce lives an enviable life. Having worked for years in the corporate world, his retirement includes the financial resources to afford luxurious vacations, high-end sports equipment, and a new modern home with expansive views. He enjoys an active dating life, attends various charitable functions, and connects regularly with his kids. As he was sharing all his accomplishments and resources with me, I began to wonder why he came in for counseling.

Linda was sitting on the floor during her play therapy session, meticulously placing tables, chairs, rugs and plants into the doll house. “Can I help?” I asked. “No.” I tried again. “Do you want me just to watch?” “I don’t care,” Linda sighed in exasperation. “Do you normally play by yourself or with your brother?” I persisted. “I play by myself. My brother messes things up, and my friends don’t do it right.”

“I’m SO angry with my boss, all she does is micro-manage me,” shared Alex. “She tells me to take initiative, so I do, and then she complains that I didn’t ask for her permission or opinion. I want to quit.” “Wow, that sounds intense!” I commented. “I thought this job was one I could just do my own thing, and turns out it’s not. I don’t know what to do.”

Bruce, Linda and Alex are all extremely successful. Bruce, having grown up worrying about where his next meal would come from, chose to create an adult life where he would never have to worry about his basic needs again. Linda, a highly intelligent kiddo, is consistently academically successful and excels in her

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music and skating lessons. Alex's artistic talents have earned her a strong reputation, and people seek out her opinion and insight in her field.

So what's the problem?

"There I was," said Bruce, "watching Polish citizens, just ordinary people, meeting Ukrainians at the border, welcoming them in to the country, offering hugs, stuffed animals, blankets, food and shelter. It was so heartfelt and raw. I just cried." In the same week I learned that Linda has cousins who live in Russia, and Alex has an adult child in the military.

It can be easy for our minds and egos to get wrapped up in our successes, and forget that we still have lessons to learn. Bruce's tears gave him the clue he needed to sign up to be a Red Cross volunteer with local families displaced by house fires. Linda's rigid, solitary play showed that she was feeling out of control in her life and, with some parenting tips, her folks were able to talk with her age-appropriately about her family and world events. Finally with some coaching, Alex was able to meet with her boss, take responsibility for her over-stepping (which she was), and share her worries about her son in the military.