

The Repair Man.

Chris sat thinking about himself. He knew he was broken, but he didn't know if he had been born broken or if being abandoned at birth and the subsequent traumas had broken him. All he knew was that he was broken.

He wasn't a particularly artistic man. He was pretty clumsy in everything requiring a deftness of touch or thought. He was literal, a person of little imagination, and lacked sophistication in thought and action. His repairs lacked the look of experience and finesse whenever he repaired something. While the repair was undoubtedly still functional and sometimes even more functional than before in terms of strength and longevity, the repair was undoubtedly never a work of art. And it was the same for the repairs he did to himself.

As a young child, he had been severely damaged mentally, emotionally, sexually, and physically. Because the damage was consistent, overwhelming, and lasted for many years, he finally broke into pieces. Humpty Dumpty was his favorite nursery rhyme because he and it had a simpatico relationship. A relationship he kept as his secret and a relationship he unfortunately knew was genuine.

At first, Chris hoped for and expected sympathy and understanding from those around him. But he soon learned that compassion and understanding are not easily doled out, especially if one asks for seconds. No, his needs far outweighed anyone's ability to sate him. His inability to trust anyone cost him one friend and then another until he was left friendless. Even so, Chris tried to fix what was broken in him that caused him to be so unlike almost everyone he knew.

Thankfully, he occasionally met people who were also very needy. Some were so needy that being around them was difficult for him! They would phone him and ask how he was, but then,

without really waiting for his answer, they would launch into why they had phoned him, and he learned their telephone call to him wasn't to find out how he was. Chris began to reflect, and he saw his reflection in those needy people, and he soon realized he was like them. Almost everything he did was done to get what he wanted. He was simply a transactional person for a lengthy period of his life, but once he realized how he behaved, he began to repair and modify this learned behavior. He became more socially acceptable once he discovered his behavior could be unlearned. He then learned about pleasure and how much he enjoyed intimate encounters.

Chris was extremely handsome. He was tall, and because of his daily hard physical work, he was strong and possessed a fine physique. He became adept at handling the physical side of relationships, and most, if not all, of his many relationships were because of his handsome looks and muscular physique. He soon found a life of pleasure, and he liked it, but after the physical delight, he was always left wanting more, and he wanted so much more that it became his obsession. Even after experiencing the best and finest pleasure he had ever experienced, he would soon become dissatisfied with his life and need the distraction of even. A life of pleasure helped Chris distract himself from his inner certainty that he was, in fact, an inferior, second-class, and utterly broken person. Chris innately followed this path of seeking pleasure, but then he heard the voice inside his mind reminding him that his life had no real meaning. He realized there would never be any sense of deep purpose in his life from the simple carnal pleasures he was finding and participating in, so he decided to change course and follow a path to a life of deeper meaning.

People like Frankl and Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Sartre, all of whom wrote about existentialism and the meaning of life, and who he had read so voraciously as a teenager, would

often come to his mind when he would lose all sense of purpose. However, of all the novels he read, he remembered the theme that seemed to pervade them all: they all believed that each person must define themselves in this absurd, illogical world and a world without deep meaning. No words could have been more accurate for the young teenager because the world around him made little sense except for the drugs, sex, and music. None of life's proposed significant societal elements - education, church, military, society, and laws- held his respect. He mostly behaved so as not to draw any wrath upon himself, but occasionally, he let slip his frustration for how the designation for living had been engineered. He wanted to know who the engineers were and who funded them. He wanted to learn how the suburbs came to be, who financed the think tanks that thought of and planned for man's inevitable increase in population, and the needs that would come from that increase. But he was too damaged and broken to spend much time around and in close contact with others. For Chris, it was as if he had been badly burned, so any excess heat would make him recoil in fear of being burnt again. It was a reaction that he could not control.

Nevertheless, remembering these things helped him become happier, and then he read this:
“Never be a prisoner of your past. It was just a lesson, not a life sentence.”

And, oh, oh, how he wished that thought, that exaggerated and self-indulgent expression of tenderness and forgiveness, could be true.

He smiled outwardly and inwardly, for he knew better than to lie or to deceive himself. Chris knew he was broken and had gotten broken sometime in his distant past. He knew he was severely damaged, but he wasn't completely broken. He liked many people, places, and things, and many people liked him. He knew he had to protect the parts of himself that remained unbroken. He had to protect them, and while he wished he didn't have to do it alone, experience

had shown him, even taught him quite harshly at times, that this was his only choice if he wanted to live a happy, optimistic, and creative life.

Chris smiled again, knowing that living the extraordinary life he now had while also being badly broken was already a tremendous outcome.

Yes, he had repaired a lot of what was broken in him. His repairs were clumsy, looked crude, and looked like he was a complete novice at repairing anything. He had fixed much of his brokenness and tried not to expose his repairs to relationships and situations where they could get broken or even damaged again.

He was genuinely thankful for his repairs, and yet he felt like crying and smiling at the same time. He felt like crying for what he didn't have, which would have been the beauty and wholeness of never having been broken. He felt like smiling for what he did have after his lifelong struggle with the horns of his dilemma, and that was for the excellent person he knew he had become.

This scenario, the crying, and the smiling had played out for Chris countless times. And yes, by countless, he knew the number was too large for him ever to count. He had struggled everywhere and in everything he had ever done because of his self-worth or, to put it another way, his worthlessness. His shame was the clothing his heart and soul wore, and under the shame was his worthlessness. As one can imagine, living anything other than a dismal, self-demeaning life was never truly possible. He found it difficult, and much of his life he had found it impossible, to reconcile his deep shame and his often feelings of total worthlessness, but his onboard quadfecta of God, happiness, gratitude, and creativity had quite literally carried him through the worst times imaginable, much like a good canoe will take a person and their

belongings through the toughest, white-water rapids of a significant river. He tried, of course, and optimism was one of his most positive traits.

During what he thought was a nonchalant conversation with a dear friend, seemingly out of nowhere, Chris learned of an ancient art called Kintsugi, which means we can embrace something being broken. Kintsugi is the Japanese tradition of mending broken pottery with gold, silver, or platinum. Kintsugi also means imperfection, and it also means golden joinery.

Chris researched and found many beautiful pictures of pottery that had been repaired using Kintsugi. And while he could still see where they had been broken, he noted that the repairs added to their beauty and, in some cases, made them even more beautiful than before. The revelation was, at first, mind-blowing for Chris. He had always thought that because everyone could see that he was once a broken man, he would always be seen as a broken man despite his repairs.

Then, one day, while meditating, he asked himself, *Why not add beauty to my repairs?* Now, laughing out loud, for he was a person who had not thought about his beauty since his teenage years, he decided he would do it. He decided he would treat his breakages and their repair as part of the history of who he was rather than as something he needed to disguise or that he needed to pretend had never happened. In this case, the beauty he would add wasn't gold, silver, or platinum, nor was the beauty he would apply going to be tattoos, fine clothes, or anything physical because his breaks, broken parts, and the parts he had fixed were not material. Chris kept thinking and decided that rather than ever talking about how he got broken again, he would focus on and show off his repairs instead. The beauty of those repairs could inspire others without ever dwelling on how they occurred. He occasionally reveled in the personal achievements of his introspections and repairs. Because of the width and depth of his brokenness

and the pain and anguish fixing his breaks had caused him, he knew his success and the reason he had prevailed was because of his forever relationship with the God in his life. Because of that, he never felt smug nor demeaned anyone who was broken or unable to repair their break or breaks. No, first of all, he wanted to repair himself, and then he wanted to be an example of self-help quietly and without demeaning anyone. He sincerely wanted to pass on what he had learned and how to repair oneself, but only if a person wanted to do that.

This revelation that he could add beauty to himself was stunning in simplicity. Yet, it was an ingredient he had been unconsciously looking for since his first awkward repairs were completed. In his defense, some of his repairs were done under the most adverse conditions imaginable. All of his repairs he did himself with the help of his God. His friends sometimes helped and often hindered, either wittingly but many times unwittingly, and still he got his repairs done.

The toll on everyone was significant, however. The toll was too much for most, if not all, of his friendships. He needed rest to recuperate from his repairs, and after he rested, he found himself alone. This was nothing new for Chris, as his life had been a scenario of being broken, beginning to get repaired, getting broken again, hiding from living a life of meaning by living a life of pleasure, and getting broken more until finally taking the long and lonely road toward the repairs. He would constantly reiterate, from experience, that no one could come with him because of the pain he needed to go through as he implemented the repairs. He knew that repairing himself would be difficult and, at times, almost impossible to withstand the pain he needed to go through to fix himself. He also knew from experience that another person might be unable to repair their brokenness.

Chris needed to commit suicide, but not physical suicide. He did not need to kill his body; instead, he needed to kill the three most essential parts of himself- the ID, the superego, and the ego. These three conscious, yet at times unconscious, elements of his being had been formed and placed over his hurried, life-saving repairs, much like a plaster cast is placed over a bone break. As he was able to kill, one at a time, each of these three parts of his personality, he became quite wild and unpredictable even to himself. However, by living alone, he was able to cope. By living alone, he had to answer to no one but himself. Chris never asked anyone for help, how they felt, or what they thought about him, and he would shy away from anyone trying to get to know him personally. He was an unfinished project and was in no hurry to let anyone see him until he felt ready to be seen.

By finding this ingredient, the “golden joinery” as kintsugi was also known, Chris now believed he could finally, and permanently, add beauty to his repairs, thus revitalizing himself with a new look, a new vibration, and he could finally give himself a second life. Chris had often thought about what life would be like without being broken and without his inner critics constantly voicing their disparaging disapproval of him. Now, finally, Chris had a calm, quiet, and loving view of himself not only repaired but repaired, having used golden joinery for the repairs. He could neither see nor touch the repairs, yet he could feel the effects of the repairs, and feeling the beauty of how he had finally been able to repair himself gave him an emboldened sense of self-worth. His self-worth emanated from the deepest parts of his heart and soul and stopped at the outside edges of his skin. His newfound self-worth drenched his heart, mind, and soul in an all-encompassing peace and love he had never felt before. His still limitless happiness, gratitude, and boundless creativity carried him on a wave of joy and expectation for which he was profoundly grateful. He thanked his God, the God he had

committed to all those decades ago and with whom he had been having the sincerest and, at times, the only relationship of his life. Yes, his God had been there the whole time. His God was similar to his repairs in that he could not see nor touch his God but could feel his God.

Chris had few humans in his life. He had a few casual friends, memories, hopes and dreams, and finally, himself. Chris opined that this change in him was much like wearing shoes that had been either too small or too big his whole life, and now, finally, he was wearing shoes that fit him perfectly. Walking naturally and comfortably would take time to learn, and he would need to adjust to now being equipped with the correct size shoes. And so it was with Chris's repairs, now enhanced with golden joinery.

Chris thought, *Learned behavior is challenging to change immediately, but learned behavior can be unlearned.* Chris knew this was true because he had already unlearned other learned behaviors.

The End.

Written by Peter Skeels © May 31st, 2022