

Weekly Lesson: REFUSE TO FUSE

Many children do not get proper emotional nourishment. Parents are unable to provide a safe, nurturing, and supportive environment. An unhealthy childhood leaves a vacancy that becomes a breeding ground for anxiety. If we sense that someone might reject us, we panic. This anxious attachment style causes us to behave in demanding, clingy, fearful, childlike, and irrational ways. In a desperate attempt to gain safety from another person, we may attach without fully vetting them. We have an urge to merge (psychologically). We may give them parental position over us. We ‘enmesh’ or overlap our emotional selves with someone else to an unhealthy degree. At a higher intensity, we may attempt to engulf (or even in extreme instances, devour) the other person we deem as our safety object. Another variation is that we allow someone to engulf or devour us, so much so that we forget who we are. Attention is directed toward the other person: to give and give and give or to take and take and take. Relationships may be dramatic with confusion, demands, and unhealed tensions as two people struggle to find balance, separateness, stability, consistency, and normalcy.

This week, refuse to fuse. Because of a childhood marked by incomplete nurturing, your attempt to fuse with another to feel safe and secure makes sense; however, it is a bad strategy. It will not deliver the results you’re seeking. Notice anxiousness in your attachments. Look for enmeshment or engulfment. Note unhealthy behaviors – yours and theirs. Pay attention to the ways that you feel threatened (or threaten another person) emotionally. It could be disagreements, demands, sarcasm, criticism, or a general dissatisfaction. Invalidating or dismissive behaviors may register high on your inner anxiety scale. Don’t judge yourself for feeling anxious. Stay kind and supportive of yourself. Explore your behavior and feelings with a gentle curiosity. In what ways were you expecting the other person to validate you emotionally? How were you relying on the other to make you feel safe and loved? What did it feel like to be fearful that you could be devalued and discarded? Develop a secure sense of yourself. You are separate from everyone else. You are safe. No one has the responsibility to re-parent you, except you. And, it is possible to re-parent yourself. You can nurture yourself. Identify your emotional needs and meet them. Don’t demand that another person be your parent, and don’t try to parent someone who is not your child. That is unfair, unrealistic, unattainable, and will lead to problems. When people are enmeshed, either or both will feel tension, fear, anxiety, and panic when one tries to assert separateness. Do your part to contribute to the health of the relationship, but refuse to fuse. Establish and maintain personal boundaries. Know where you end and the other person starts. A healthy, mutually enriching relationship is made of two separate, emotionally-well people.

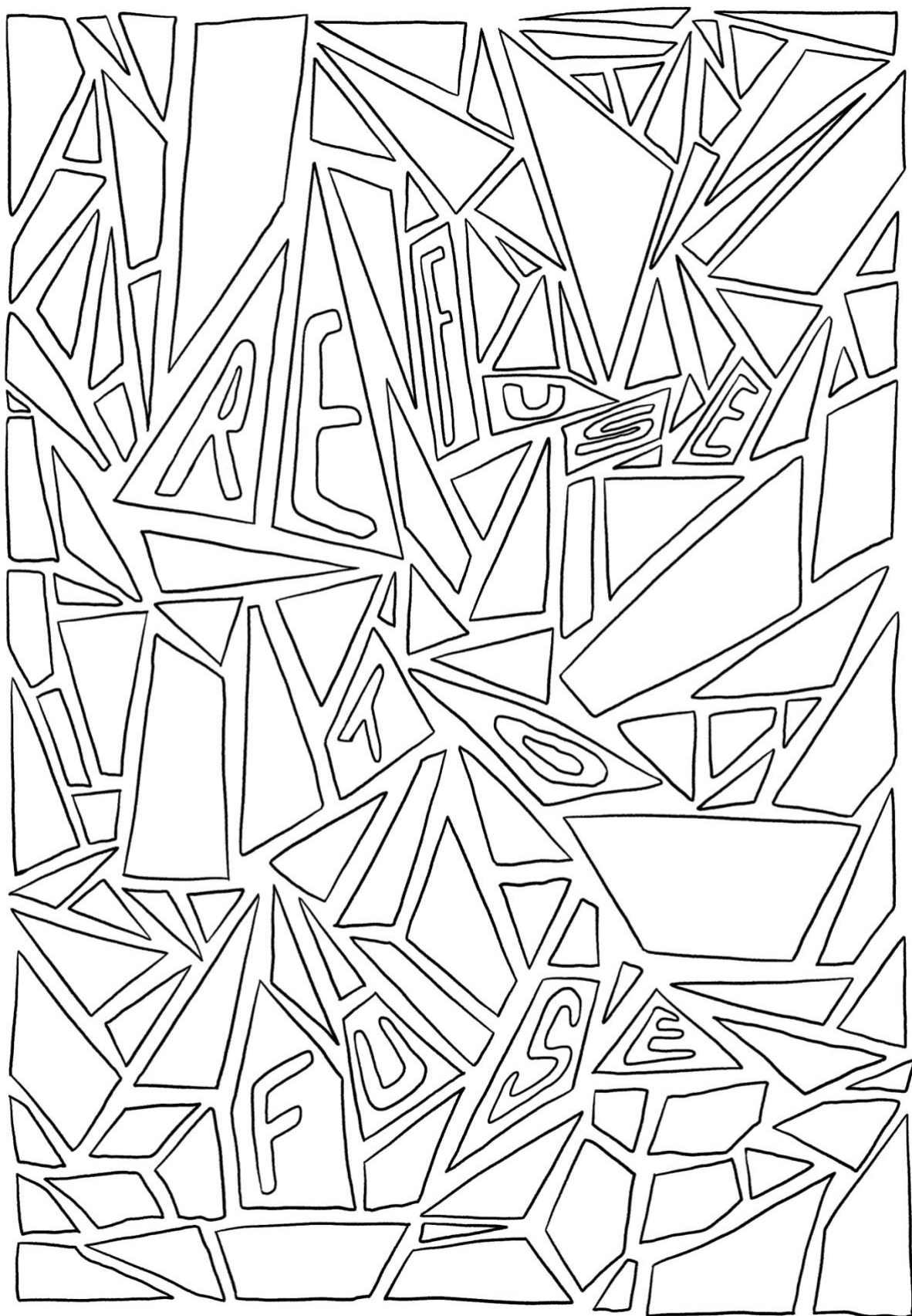
PERSONALIZE THIS LESSON

Think: Enmeshment with another is unhealthy and unnecessary. Relationships work best by the health and wellness of two separate people contributing freely to the benefit of both people.

Feel: I feel encouraged to develop boundaries. I feel responsible for my emotional security.

Do: Reduce emotional threats in my interactions with others. Refuse to fuse. Be separate.

Memorize: For each one shall bear his own load. (Galatians 6:5).



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What has been your experience with psychological enmeshment? Who has tried to engulf you, and/or who have you tried to engulf to feel safe? Describe. Use specific examples.

Reviewing your current relationships, describe in detail the relationship that is in need of a tune up.

Write a commitment statement declaring your intention to pursue healthy, mutually enriching relationships.

Some goals of growing up are (a) to be separate from others, (b) to feel inner stability, and (c) to feel safe in relationships. In what ways can you re-parent yourself to obtain proper emotional nourishment so you can achieve these goals?

Suggested Song: “Heart of God” by Zach Williams (Heart of God, 2022, Provident Label Group).
