

Controlling People

By : Equanimity

Review of "Controlling People" by Patricia Evans

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Controlling People

Evans does a brilliant job of coming up with a simple recipe for communicating this dynamic. This book is very helpful and worthwhile. The book introduced me to the idea of psychic boundaries - that is everything that is me that is unseen - my energy, spirit, ideas, thoughts, soul, etc. and the idea of creating a boundary around these parts of myself being as important as having physical boundaries. Evans also does a great job of describing how we come to define ourselves from the outside in - having early influences negate our experience of self and redefine us, thereby teaching us to "act backwards" and define ourselves from the outside.

Where the book leaves off or falls short - and readers should know this - is in conveying the psychological complexity that goes with this dynamic. Evans' approach, which is communicative vs psychological, is largely black and white, where the "Controller" is portrayed as the unhealthy bad guy who is under a spell, and the "Witness" is portrayed as the healthy, innocent bystander who lives with the spellbound person. I believe this theory is too simple to be realistic. It leaves "Witnesses" without any real understanding of their role in the dynamic - why are they there in the first place and how can they avoid making the same choices again? With no understanding of these things, the "Witness" is truly a victim. The book can leave "Controllers" feeling shamed, when in reality, they deserve compassion - it is essential in the healing process. Evans conveys compassion for "Witnesses" but not for "Controllers". Evans asserts that "Controllers" are a minority of people and that most other people are not cut off from themselves. Because Evans is generalizing based on extremes, this is true. In reality, there is a huge continuum - people play the "Controller" and the "Witness" at different times, with different people, and in different ways. People are cut off from themselves in some ways and not in others. If "Witnesses" were healthy, why would they be in relationships with "Controllers" - wouldn't their intact sense of self direct them out of such a relationship?

This book is a worthwhile read, but the reader should keep in mind that Evans' approach is not psychological and the simplification of this dynamic is for communication purposes only. In reality the dynamic is complex, requires compassion, and an understanding that everyone plays a part - there are no innocent bystanders. The book is a starting point. It is not an Rx for understanding and dealing with this dynamic, but it is a helpful tool in the process of awakening.

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