

## The problem:

I had known my father for 33 years. We were always close, and there was always a dysfunction. The dysfunction was simple. He was an alcoholic who would really misbehave when he drank. The dysfunction was that whenever a whole bunch of mayhem would happen one night, the next day it gets swept under the table. Crazy conversations, dysfunctional behaviour, blowouts, trouble with law, embarrassing melt downs, it was like it never happened the next day. Then it became incredibly easy for me to avoid uncomfortable situations by ignoring the day before as well. So many other parts of the relationship were reasonable and enjoyable that why would I **raise my discomfort** level when I could just carry on. I'm sure his business partners ran into this, both his ex-wives gave into this, and then I've been doing it for years too. The comfort level of ignoring the **"ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM"** far outweighed the discomfort of bringing it up.

This is a very COMMON method of operation for alcoholics. It shows up a lot for addicts, and co-dependant people, and people with a mental illness who are not confronting it.

This worked for the most part, until one day it didn't.

## What happened:

His life's savings ran out and I inherited him as a dependant. He had a big house that was reverse mortgaged, and couldn't pay any of the bills. The land was set for going up in value a lot but hadn't yet, and retaining the big house and acreage seemed like a financial necessity if not a million dollar miracle. He wanted to die in that house, and it could become worth a million dollars in the mean time. If I could keep the house until he passed away in it, he would give it to me, and we were all saved.

The problem was, this mortgage needed to be paid, the house needed repair badly, and there was no money anywhere unless we financed equity in the house. His bills, the mortgage, repair, plus my cost of living and my house, all added up to \$8500/month cash, after tax. This was steep, and I went to work very HARD to pay this bill. I worked many hours, long days, 300 days a year. During this, his dysfunction grew, money was squandered by him, lost, and I had to replace it. His behaviour scared off renters we put into the house, he was needy for me on my days off, and I was falling apart under stress. I also had access to large sums of cash, and bought very useful things and services that drained the bank account. Useful as they were, I was barely making more money than our bills, and the spending of savings drained the account. I was surrounded by irrationality. His irrationality, and mine.

We were headed for a brick wall. Bankruptcy meant losing **everything**. The house couldn't be sold at the time, not for a few years. My health was failing, if it did I couldn't work and we would become insolvent shortly. The doctors warned me of

potential death. There seemed no avenue that didn't involve extreme loss, and I felt very trapped.

### **Where my stress was coming from:**

Stress came from many places. 300 days of work lead to many things. My ANS nervous system started to collapse. I lost 3 dimensional vision, the ability to feel time, then the ability to feel motion. I had a 62 day long anxiety attack, and then amnesia came in and I lost approximately a decade of memories. A cognitive behavioural therapist recorded approximately 50 suicidal impulses per day for me, for over 60 days in the winter of 2013. I was mentally ill again, something I was supposed to have beaten 12 years earlier and is why I became a public speaker in the first place. My speaking career ended over night, the joy of my life was gone.

This still was not the chief source of my stress. Through the help of another person, a **THIRD PARTY**, I was able to see myself objectively, and what was hurting me the most.

I was surrounded by irrationality, and I was participating in it too. There was an elephant in the room, and I was pretending it wasn't that big. I allowed another person to deny it, and I didn't confront them on it. I was tolerating the intolerable, dying a slow death even though I value life. I was suffering, when I teach happiness. I was providing for myself the very same life I committed to saving other people from. I was communicating softly when I wanted to scream. I was not making myself heard, when what I said mattered. I was letting someone in a state of irrationality affect my life, when I was the most level headed person there.

I had lost my integrity. I had denied the truth that was inside me. That was where the stress was really coming from.

### **What it was costing me**

I had lost myself, the closest relationship I will ever have. I could no longer trust me.

This cost me my happiness, my hope, and self respect.

I became truly alone.

## When I finally realized the truth

While speaking to a **THIRD PARTY** I was complaining about how “unclear” my parent was about what I was going through and what really needs to happen. I was complaining about their inability to see the cold hard truth of the situation. About their inability to grasp we are not going to get everything we want, and we might need to change the plan.

The third party asked me: “Did you tell the other person that?”

I said: “Of course I did, isn’t our situation obvious?”

Third party: “But do they get it?”

I said: “Clearly not”

Third party: “Why don’t you ensure they get it?”  
 “Then I wouldn’t be to blame for the insanity anymore”

I was flabbergasted at the plainness of the conversation.

Is it possible that nagging, pleading, mental projection, and asking people to change their mind is “inadequate” at ensuring they get my point of view?

I had enough of inadequacy.

## What I did about it

1. I got mad, real mad, and then I got determined.
2. I wrote out our problems in a long document with these headings:
  - a. **Our situation**
  - b. **What’s working well**
  - c. **What’s not working well**
  - d. **What I am doing to contribute to the problem**
  - e. **What I am going to do to solve my end.**
3. Then I solved my end, and I was bold, brave, and owned all my own INSANITY and I fixed it. Did a good job of it too.
  - a. Cleaned up my spending, my defects of character, my dishonesty, I started talking about elephants every time I saw one.
4. Then I dumped a second document on the table, a long one, a well worded one.
  - a. **What I’ve solved in myself**
  - b. **What you are doing to contribute to the problem**
  - c. **What I need you to do about it**

- d. What I am going to do if you don't solve it.
- e. What I am going to reward you with if you do.

*I tackled the drinking, our family's history. I asked questions I always wanted to ask but never had the courage to. I brought up points so uncomfortable that most people would never bring them up in conversation with another human being. I brought up finances, our future together, getting rid of that house, forsaking what could be a million dollars, consequences for drinking that no one ever has the courage to do to an alcoholic. I made my parent ask me stuff they always wanted to know, I brought up the undeniable truths. I brought up every little unanswered thought and feeling I never communicated.*

*I had him do the same, where he was willing, and when he wasn't, I reached for my consequences.*

*He was so uncomfortable with the degree of honesty that I was having with him his face went red, and it looked like he was collapse right there.*

*I chased the **ELEPHANT RIGHT OUT OF THE ROOM***

*I restored my integrity, I restored trust in me, I restored the relationship to myself.*

Despite the mental illness, I immediately got the feeling of SANITY back. Hope came back second, and then confidence right after that. I could function again, I felt alive and capable and happy, despite the collapsed nervous system.

## **What it's like now**

1. My dad broke the rules and I held him accountable and he CHANGED!
  - a. It was rough, but I stuck to my agreement on paper. My consequences were very harsh, and based on accountability.
  - b. No one in his life ever **truly confronted** his drinking before, they just nagged, suggested, and pleaded.
2. He drinks 1/10 as much as he used to.
  - a. He got real addiction treatment and listened to it for first time in 70 years.
3. I sold the house on him anyways but he did give me his blessing.
  - a. He moved into a tiny apartment.
4. I gave the house to an investor to sell and she sold it for \$80,000 more than it was worth.

- a. The new owners are living in a perfect place for them.
5. My bills dropped to \$3500/ month.
6. I found a special doctor who identified my nervous system disorder as being there since I was born and having been the real problem all these years. There is a treatment for it, and I paid for it with the extra cash I had now, and have a brighter future than I ever would have had.
7. I include my extensive knowledge of nervous systems in my counselling now and have done some small wonders for families of troubled youth.
8. My dad and I are closer than we have ever been.
9. I still have some residual symptoms from the nervous system disorder and the stress I put myself through. Somehow though, I feel richer because of it, I know what I am made out of now.
10. I can own who I am.

**Irony of it all?** 14 days of living in a tiny apartment in an old folks home with people he can interact with, he tells me this is the happiest he has been in a long time. He never should of thought to stay in that house.

I'll never compromise with another person's dysfunction again.

I will always ensure people know exactly what page I am on, when I need them to.

Please see my Heavy Communication documents for examples of real life communications between people.