

## Therapy and Blaming Parents

I don't believe that our culture causes grown children to ask the right questions about themselves or their parents and that's partially the fault of us therapists. As therapists we hold up the ideal parent as a way to shine a light on what an adult's life could have been if they'd had better parenting. This serves the purpose of helping the adult child to not blame herself for self-limiting and self-hating voices, and to allow her distance from parents and others whose contact serves to amplify that voice rather than diminish it. It also allows a creative space to imagine what she might feel or accomplish without the critical voices that may have brought him or her into therapy in the first place. Helping adult children see what they didn't get and what they should've gotten is one of the big tools in our tool chest and one that I go to on a daily basis.

But, there's a downside to that. In so doing, we tempt adult children to feel contempt or hatred for their parents for making the decisions that they did. We encourage their anger because of the motivating power it has to carry the anger away from the self. But in the same way that hating the sin not the sinner still involves hate, encouraging anger and contempt for a parent doesn't really free the adult child from that of which they need to be freed.

At least not for long. At some point, therapists encourage a kind of victimized stance in relation to the parent and not one that views the parent in a more three-dimensional way.