

Defect Dogs

Imagine living in a small town where every day we need to journey from one side to the other. There are many possible routes, shortest, fastest, boring, or pleasant. We want to use the quickest, but the problem is that a large vicious dog lives on this route. Each time we go along it, the dog appears snarling and snapping at us.

We try to complain about the owner, but when we enquire, we find that most people think the dog belongs to us and they wish we would control it because it is making their lives hell. Our first reaction might be that we will arm ourselves and give it such a thrashing that it won't come near us again. Anybody who has encountered powerful dogs knows that this is a hopeless idea. Once the dog has started to attack, it is uncontrollable and deadly beyond any defence we can muster. We cannot fight, kill or control it. The only option is avoiding it. We may feel that we are running away from a problem that we should be able to face, but eventually we come to see that this is the only answer.

Avoiding the dog means becoming willing to change our normal life and go a different way. This change will mean that we have to take a bit more time and find our way around parts of the town that we have not visited before.

The dog is a representation of our worst defects and the monkey often brings this other animal into our life. When we were drinking, we spent so much time with the dog strutting at our heels that everybody assumed it was ours. Strangely in our drinking days we either didn't know it was there or we laughed at how it intimidated the people we met.

Those of us who have experienced uncontrollable anger know this feeling well. We encounter something that triggers our violent reaction and our emotions flare out of control leaving us a bystander in the torrent of verbal and physical abuse we hurl, but the dog is not just a representation of anger. Once unleashed, any of the major defects can take over and leave us with little control.

A friend had commented that I was always late for the start of the meeting. I was determined to change this and so I volunteered to bring the milk and tea. I was sure this would focus my mind.

I found that each week just before I left the house, somebody in the family would desperately need my attention. Each week one of my children needed me. Billy had forgotten to pick up the children's homework or Betty was leaving her husband. I had to drive across town to solve their problems and then feel guilty that I had let the meeting down.

Sometimes I would try and put the meeting first, but then I felt I was letting my family down. Regardless of my choice, I ended up feeling guilty. I don't know if I will ever get it fully under control, but I know that unless I keep focused on my right to have some time for myself I end up battered by my desire to help. It would be nice if they would stop having their problems, but I am the only person I can change and so that is what I am doing. One day at a time, I try not to carry my entire family.

It is not easy to keep the dog out of our lives. It has been a part of us for longer than we can remember and to expect it simply to cease to exist is unrealistic. We are changing the way we live and this change does not always feel natural or normal. We have pushed the dog away. It is gone, but prowls close by, waiting for a chance to take its place at our heels again.

Every day of our life, we have to make the decision to use the more scenic route rather than risk awakening the dog.

~O~

ANY COMMERCIAL USE OR PUBLICATION OF ALL OR PART OF DOCUMENTS ON THIS SITE IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED, WITHOUT PRIOR WRITTEN AUTHORISATION FROM:

WWW.MONKEYONMYSHOULDER.CO.UK. (MONKEY@MONKEYONMYSHOULDER.CO.UK)

THE COPYRIGHT REMAINS WITH THE AUTHOR UNDER ALL CONDITIONS.

THIS DOCUMENT IS PROVIDED "AS IS," AND COPYRIGHT HOLDERS MAKE NO REPRESENTATIONS OR WARRANTIES, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY, FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE, NON-INFRINGEMENT, OR TITLE; THAT THE CONTENTS OF THE DOCUMENT ARE SUITABLE FOR ANY PURPOSE; NOR THAT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUCH CONTENTS WILL NOT INFRINGE ANY THIRD PARTY PATENTS, COPYRIGHTS, TRADEMARKS OR OTHER RIGHTS.

COPYRIGHT HOLDERS WILL NOT BE LIABLE FOR ANY DIRECT, INDIRECT, SPECIAL OR CONSEQUENTIAL DAMAGES ARISING OUT OF ANY USE OF THE DOCUMENT OR THE PERFORMANCE OR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONTENTS THEREOF.