

Relationship Author Susan Anderson Explains Common Patterns in 'Taming Your Outer Child'



By [Sarah Batcheller](#)

If you've ever spent a day using retail therapy to calm what's upsetting you, then the [self-help relationship book](#) *Taming Your Outer Child: Overcoming Self-Sabotage & Healing Your Life* is for you. Relationship author Susan Anderson uses her expertise in psychotherapy to pinpoint the cause of behavior she's named the Outer Child, and she attributes these actions to our fear of abandonment. In relationships especially, fear of being left causes us to act out irrationally and push our partners away, even when we don't mean to. Analyzing our Outer Child allows us to prevent such behavior in the future. Read on for more of Anderson's fascinating love advice on how to tame the Outer Child!

Love Advice From Expert Relationship Author

We love the concept of the Outer Child, the counterpart to the all-too-familiar Inner Child. What inspired you to explore this idea in your new self-help relationship book?

My primary area of expertise is abandonment, and I've developed a program to help people heal from the primal wound. The biggest problem that many people have is that they develop patterns out of abandonment that affect their next

relationships. It also impacts how they eat, drink, and shop; it gives rise to a whole host of bad behaviors. The Inner Child is about healing, but the Outer Child is about acting out. It's the part that shows on the outside, like a wart or a mole. Therefore, one of the most important parts of helping people overcome the Outer Child is helping them overcome self-sabotage.

Would you say that every person has an Outer Child and the degree in which it acts out varies or that some people have no Outer Child at all?

Everyone has an Outer Child because everyone has a way of looking for fulfillment. Not everybody can have deep personal fulfillment at every level, so everybody has little guilty secrets. For instance, they may pop a piece of candy in their mouth when they're feeling a moment of emptiness. We're all imperfectly human in that way.

Related Link: [Why We're Wired to Sabotage Our Relationships](#)

Is there a correlation between having experienced abandonment and the intensity of Outer Child behavior?

Yes. Abandonment is primal, so it's really the root of everything – it's that first fear we have. If you have a more fresh experience with abandonment, something that still throbs, then you will have lots of Outer Child behavior.

A very common pattern is the tendency to be attracted only to the unavailable, and when someone comes along who is available, you have no chemistry and you don't feel a connection. This is particularly common pattern among celebrities; they have a very difficult time because they're very eligible and everybody wants to be with them. They struggle to feel connected with someone who is actually available.

The way this connects to abandonment is complicated but

interesting. First of all, there's the fear of abandonment. If you get attached to someone, you risk losing them. So if you're going after people who are unavailable, you're constantly trying to have a relationship, but you're never really having one. You're trying to avoid the pain of really losing someone. The only problem is that, while you're pursuing someone like this, it's usually a very emotional and difficult experience.

Secondly, when you go through abandonment, the feelings are so horrible that you can't wait to get better, so you try to find ways to get rid of those feelings, maybe by meeting a new person or tackling a big project. Since abandonment is a wound and scar tissue forms over the wound, that area becomes numb, so you can't feel love unless it's in the form of insecurity. If you're with somebody who's totally available, you can't even feel that. The only thing you can feel is when somebody makes you feel like they're going to leave you any minute or that you're not good enough. Then, you *think* you're attracted to that person.

Susan Anderson Presents Compelling Dating Advice in Self-Help Relationship Book

How does the Outer Child play into compatibility or incompatibility in a relationship? For example, if two people have similar Outer Child tendencies, could that make them more or less compatible?

In the ideal relationship, two people's adult selves would be very sweet to each other's Inner Children. The Inner Child is the vulnerable part of a person, so in a relationship, we should be very sensitive, kind, caring, and understanding towards each other. But what happens in a lot of relationships is that the Outer Children get into a power struggle because

the Outer Child is always trying to create problems and has control issues.

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In your book, you mention the Emotional Pendulum: Fear of Abandonment versus Fear of Engulfment. Can you give us some examples of how the Outer Child acts out as a result of these two opposing feelings?

It's a very natural to have those two opposing feelings. The Outer Child has a tendency to act them out, so when you feel the fear of abandonment, the Outer Child aims your emotional suction cup at your partner and scares them away, or it gets stiff and angry. On the other hand, when your partner is available, you now feel the engulfment. The Outer Child acts that out by leaving, being cold, being critical, or shutting down. The pendulum swings between the two.

Finally, we'd love to ask you for some dating advice! How can acknowledging the Outer Child help someone find love?

When you realize how much your Outer Child has been interfering, you realize that you need to do some healing. This involves developing a relationship between your adult self and your Inner Child. When these two are in alignment and there's a caring, nurturing relationship going on, that sets the tone for you to be able to relate well to someone else. It also keeps the Outer Child out of the picture.

For more information on Susan, visit www.outerchild.net and www.abandonment.net. Don't forget to pick up a copy of Taming Your Outer Child!