

### **Depression - Accepting the Past**

“They did the best they could,” a client said about her parents. One parent was an addict and the other brought various lovers in and out of the children’s lives after the divorce. Neither parent sought any help. I suggested that these parents did not do the best they could. I told her that if she were involved in such behaviors toward her children and came to me for help, I would tell her that she was not doing right by her kids and that her kids deserved better. She was shocked. She had spent twenty years denying that her parents had the power to choose to make things different but didn’t. She went on to tell me about her parents’ terrible childhoods and how they were victims of their dysfunctional families. I didn’t buy it. I said I could tell her about many people who had terrible upbringings and who chose to do things differently because they were real about their parents’ failures and about their own personal power to live a moral life anyway. I let her know that folks who excuse such parental behavior tend to assume the role of the helpless victim and repeat the whole cycle, subjecting their children to the same selfishness that was perpetrated on them. They become the self-involved adult who is still waiting for that love they missed as a child, making everyone else (including their children) cater to their needs as they move from crisis to crisis. This is one reason it’s scary for some of us to be real about our history. That is, if we decide that “they” could have chosen differently, WE have to grow up and make changes that we had previously decided were just too hard. And, while we may need help to navigate a new way, we won’t be able to say we “did the best we could” if we don’t take the hard road to change!