



## Susan Rudnick

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Susan Rudnick, LCSW is a longtime psychotherapist in private practice in Manhattan. The three disciplines that inform her work are her Psychoanalytic Training at the Karen Horney Institute, Focusing, and her practice of Zen Buddhism. She is interested in the interface between spirituality and psychotherapy, and contributed a chapter to the book *Into the Mountain Stream: Psychotherapy and Buddhist Experience*. She is a haiku poet, and is about to complete a long term project of writing a memoir about growing up with her developmentally challenged sister. She serves on the board of the Focusing Institute.

Serge Prengel, LMHC is the editor the *Relational Implicit* project (<http://relationalimplicit.com>).

For better or worse, this transcript retains the spontaneous, spoken-language quality of the podcast conversation.

Susan: So Harvey Weinstein is a person who has been doing this for many, many years. And I think that... I start from the place where every human being, deeply, in some place in them, wants to have authentic, real connection with other people, with other women, men doesn't matter... wants to have a connection. And a person like Harvey Weinstein has become very involved in becoming a very powerful being, and put their efforts into that. And, in so doing, they have lost the ability to just have one-on-one real deep connection. And so what they're doing is, they're doing a facsimile or distorted version when they get into the abuse of women in the power play by having them perform sexually for them. They're doing a very distorted version of human connection. And that distorted version of human connection gives them something, but it's not the real connection that people need. And so they have to keep doing it over and over again to get that thing that they're thinking they're getting by doing that, but they're not really getting it. And so it's a never ending hunger that's never satisfied and keeps on going and going and going and going... and you never get there. And that's how I understand some of his depraved behavior: as a distorted version of something that isn't ever going to satisfy.

Serge: Yeah. So, instead of being able to have the authentic connection they want to have...

Susan: Underneath... They would never talk about it like that. They might not, but they're just talking about it as... I don't know how they're talking about it. It's like a turn on? It's objectifying women. It's, it's getting it on that way. It's a ludicrous and unsatisfying way to have some sort of relationship with a person.

- Serge: And so as therapists, when we see something like this, it brings us back to not simply going into the outrage of how people can do that, but it's a reminder of how powerful that primal need for authentic connection is... To see... How can we use that reminder....
- Susan: Because it's a way of understanding that person as a very, very vulnerable, fragile human being underneath it all. And so it helps us be less judgmental about the person. You're just understanding them... That's what they're doing to get this, and they're not getting anywhere. And sometimes people, when you can relate to them from that place, they will acknowledge it.
- Serge: Obviously, we're talking about understanding as opposed to condoning. But it's not just about understanding him, or understanding people who do that, but it's also understanding the intensity of that need in human nature. If we see that it goes to that extreme, we see how powerful a need it must be, to emerge in some way or another.
- Susan: It has to go somewhere, and it goes there, unfortunately. What we don't really always understand is what actually happened that prevented the person in the first place... Or what they didn't get... What they were missing as children from their parents in terms of authentic connectedness. They didn't learn it. They didn't know. So they substituted power for connection: "Well, if I can't have connection, I'll have power and mastery". That would be a Horneyan, way of understanding the character that develops that idealizes and lives for power.
- Serge: Yeah. So, in that sense, we have a framework for understanding sex, or sex and power, as not something that are disparate... That just so happened in the case of these people to be badly intermingled... What you're talking about: There's a very deep need for connection. When not being able to have it, power is a substitute. And therefore, the thirst for power is going to be unquenchable... unquenchable never
- Susan: Unquenchable... Because it's never going to satisfy the original need.

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