

Apologies To The Battered Child (From A Parent In Process)

BY JEFF BROWN

I apologize for beating you with my fists and feet when you were small and vulnerable. I apologize for wounding your body temple. I apologize for burning your hands, breaking your finger, scarring your flesh. I simply couldn't see you, laying there in a pool of blood and sorrow. Blinded by my own repressed rage, I saw an easy mark for my aggression. I saw a new host for my pain.

I now understand that my abusiveness was a smokescreen for my own woundedness. A habit entrenched early in life, it felt easier to repeat the abuse than to heal it. And, in many ways, your aliveness reminded me of my own deadness – I had to shut you down so I could remain asleep.

Below it all, I had so much love for you, my sweet child. I just couldn't manifest it. I don't ask for your forgiveness – you must be true to your own process first – but I do ask that you grant yourself permission to heal and to live a life that is liberated from my effects.

I apologize for attempting to dim your beautiful light. It was so bright that it threatened my own unmet need for attention – who would notice me, in your enlivened presence?

Although I was chronologically older than you when we had you,

I was actually emotionally regressed, trapped in an unhealed primal consciousness that ruled my behavior. I had grown up in a family of love-starved narcissists, each of us clamoring to see our individual reflections in a too-tiny pool of validation.

With our lights hidden under a bushel of shame, no one ever felt seen. Stealing other people's light became my misguided path of self-elevation, a misplaced attempt at boosting my diminished self-concept. I am so sorry for this attack on the integrity of your being. You had every right to embody your magnificence with dignity. You had every right to shine.

I apologize for vilifying and scapegoating you. I am sorry that I actively blamed you for my own misery. I couldn't hold my self-hatred any longer – I needed to pass it on to someone else. You were the perfect recipient for my frustration – you couldn't defend yourself.

And, I remember the worst of it – telling you that my life would have been better if you had died instead of the daughter I lost. As I read these words, I find myself almost turning away from your picture – it is too much to imagine that I could leave you with that – but I stay and face your image.

I face it not because I can change what I have done, but because I owe it to you to stay in the fire of my own regret.

I apologize for mocking you and repeatedly calling you names. I should have known the scars that insults leave on a vulnerable being – mockery was fundamental to my family dynamics. In the heat of desperate survivalism, insulting each other was a momentary relief from our chronic state of hopelessness. I am sorry for perpetuating that pattern at your expense.

I only wish I could reach inside of you and take back the words I left there. I know that you internalized many of those insults and believed them to be true. I know that it shaped your lens. Please know that my message was entirely my own stuff. Please know that you are beautiful in my eyes. And, more importantly, please know that you are beautiful through your own eyes. Please heal the remnants of my madness.

I apologize for turning others against you and pitting you against your siblings. Lodged in a competitive worldview, my reality was divided into territories – threats and protections, enemies and friends, them and us. The demons of duality – ne'er the twain shall meet.

Through this fearful lens, differences were equated with threats to survival rather than opportunities for learning. Like snorting animals on the prowl, if you didn't behave like us, you were the enemy. Because you were so different from the rest of us, I identified you as an enemy. I forgot our biological connection, our shared humanness, our karmic engagement.

I forgot the bridge that existed between our hearts.

I am so deeply sorry that I left you alone in your developing years. I apologize for abandoning you when you needed me most. I remember your cries for contact, your tireless efforts to connect, your tearful eyes through the living room window as I drove away. I looked away, but I still felt you. I just couldn't do anything about it.

In many ways, I confused you with the bad marriage that produced you, a marriage that I longed to escape from so desperately. When I had you, I was so emotionally immature. There was so little space inside me for another person's

needs. As I grow into my real adulthood, I am able to empathize with your heartbreak. In the last years, I have spent much time growing into the parent you deserved. Please know that I have taken that journey seriously.

I want you to know that I see you better now. I see the fear that I left you with. I see the ways that it impacted on your life choices, emotional availability, patterns of self-distracted. I see the ways that self-doubt prevented you from fully owning your power.

Despite my madness, some part of me noticed the ways that you shut down to cope – the shallowing of your breath, the armoring of your heart, the reluctance to be seen. But I also see the ways that you overcame. I see the ways that you championed your own cause.

I see the ways that you converted your fear into hope. I see how hard you worked to grow yourself. I am proud of you in ways that words can never express.

Most of the greatest achievements on the planet are unknown to others – private overcomings, silent attempts at belief, re-opening a shattered heart. The real path of champions truly lies within – the transforming of suffering into expansion, the clearing of horrifying debris, the building of a healthy self-concept without tools.

The greatest achievers have found a way to believe in something good despite being traumatized and fractured on life's battlefields. You are one of them. You overcame me. No matter what else you accomplish in your life, you are already a champion.

I am grateful that you disconnected from me many years ago instead of coming back for more abuse. You realized that I couldn't meet your parental needs and that you had to look elsewhere. You were so very right. By choosing to protect yourself, you also created the conditions for my own transformation. In your absence, in your determined refusal to enable my patterns, I was forced to recognize my impact.

At first, I resisted the learning, but the love I felt for you penetrated my defenses and left me with no other option but to do the work. That work took me far back in time – both to our time together and to my own early life. Ah, the Power of Then – the impact of unresolved feelings on our now consciousness. Try as I did to disarm them by witnessing them, it was entirely ineffective.

You cannot heal and resolve your emotional material with your mind. Your emotional material does not evaporate because you watch it. You can only heal your heart with your heart.

I had no choice but to go back down the path and re-claim my feelings. In this way, you were my greatest teacher – the one who gave me back my heart.

Over the years, my own emotional armour has melted away. I have lost the energy that I once had to distract from my truth. I have grown tired of my falsity, denials, and projections. And something has grown within me – a willingness to see what I have done and to acknowledge where I have failed.

I don't know if I will have another incarnation to do it better, but I want to set a loving intention before I die. I want to be living in truth when I close my eyes on this lifetime. And some part of the truth is horrifying to me. I

know what I have done. I know the violence in my heart. And I know the causal factors: the desperate survivalism that plagued my family line, the shutting down of my emotional current, the build-up of resentment.

But I also know that I had a choice. I could hear the voice of love calling me away during those acts of violence, but I chose to continue. I was influenced by my childhood, but I alone chose my path. Before God and before you, I am accountable for those choices.

As our society crosses the bridge from survivalism to authenticity as our way of being, I have every faith that we will one day move from love. I have done it, and I feel confident that others will follow.

As part of that process, I call on all bullies to step out of their comfort zone and make determined efforts to shift their abusive paradigm. To find the courage to face the source of their rage. To break the lineage of toxic conditioning. To find constructive ways to soften their edges. To steer the collective (un)consciousness in new directions. To learn healthy ways to channel their aggression. Don't do it only for those who you are harming. Do it for yourself as well. There is no life with a closed heart.

I do not know how God will judge me. I do not know how you will judge me. I do know that I have done all I can to own my actions and to open my heart. I am on my knees before truth. Know that I understand if you choose to remain disconnected. I truly do. You have to be true to your own process.

But also know that I am here for you if ever you choose to open the gate again. Nearly 50 years late, but the way is clear.

Jeff is the author of [Soulshaping: A Journey of Self-Creation](#) , [Ascending with Both Feet on the Ground: Words to Awaken your Heart](#) and [An Uncommon Bond](#) .

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A JOURNEY OF SELF-CREATION

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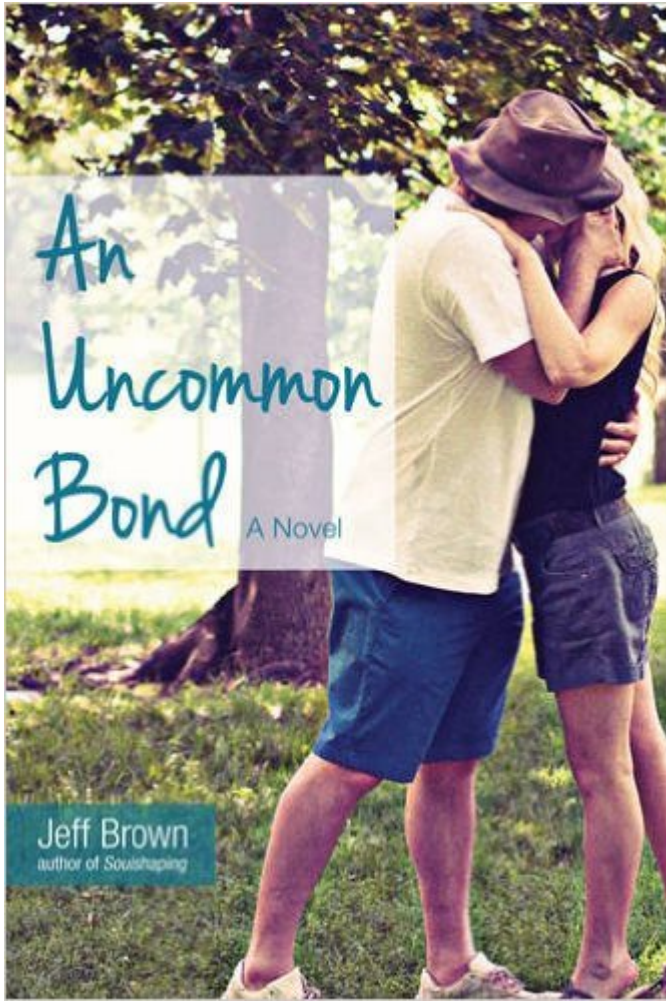
Words to Awaken your Heart

JEFF BROWN

Author of *Soulshaping*



"I love learning about life and truth through the wizardry of Jeff's words. I think you will too." —ELIZABETH LESSER, author of *Broken Open*



Words. So powerful. They can crush
a heart, or heal it. They can shame
a soul, or liberate it. They can shatter
dreams, or energize them. They can
obstruct connection, or invite it. They
can create defenses, or melt them.
We have to use words wisely.

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