

You Will Always Carry Your Emotional Baggage

It will just get lighter, and the contents may shift around

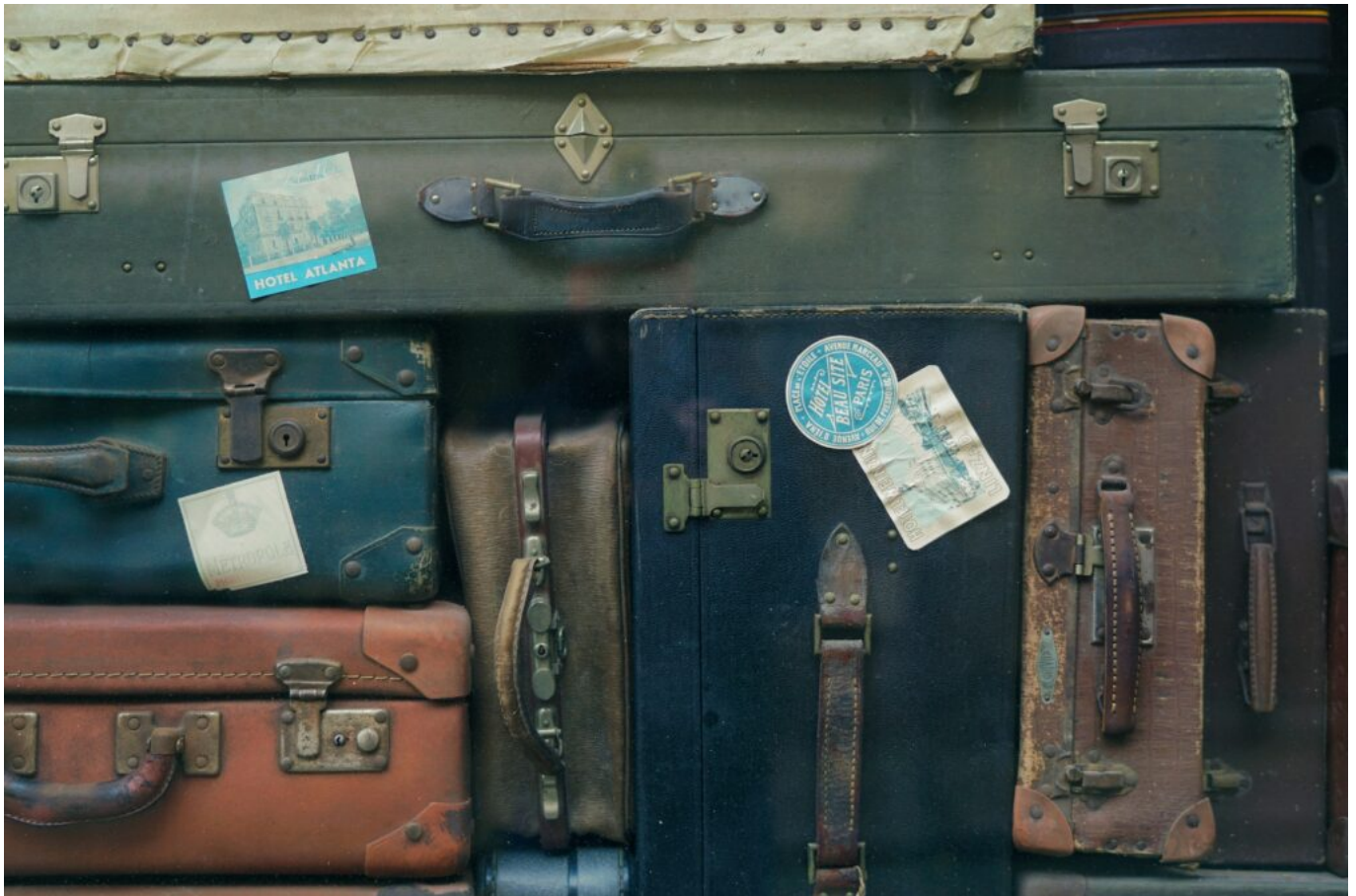


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Life keeps changing. That is a fact. When you live a certain number of years, you will acquire some wounds and emotional baggage. For some, these wounds are deeper and the baggage that much heavier. For others it may be different. That is okay. No need to compare. There is no such thing, as a “Trauma Olympics”.

Regardless, I have become aware of a faulty assumption. It is an assumption I held for a long time, but which I am forced to question. Perhaps I am not the only one. There is tons of self-help advice that repeat this assumption. Many of my friends and family also perpetuate it, whenever we talk about personal growth. A million dung beetles can’t err, can they?

The assumption is, that through work, and dedication all your wounds heal and your emotional baggage eventually disappears.

A lot of relationship advice hits in the same spot. "Don't date someone, with baggage, it says."

For myself, I have come to a different realization.

My Emotional Baggage Will Never Go Away

Like everyone else, I have my share of emotional scars, some of which I process through writing. There is the issue of low self-worth, caused by years of bullying. Or the scars I carried away from toxic relationships.

Over the past 2 years, or so I have put a lot of work into dealing with this emotional baggage. I went to therapy. I keep filling up my gratitude journals. And I meditate and practice mindfulness as much as I can overcome. I even rebuilt my life, after throwing it up in the air. I thought, I am healed. That I have come on the other side. I even put myself out in the dating game again. And now, I am happy to report that my efforts have paid off. I am once again no longer single. I am the embodiment of the self-help success story, am I not?



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No, not really. There is a funny contradiction about self-help and self-improvement. It has a severe limitation. We are doing it by ourselves. But we only get to see if we healed for real, once we connect with others. It is easy to keep up a solid routine, when there is no one in your life, but yourself. And as long as you don't interact much with other .people, their

behavior cannot trigger you. But that does not mean, your baggage is gone. Maybe it is just hidden.

A New Relationship Can Bring up Old Wounds

So, I met this great girl on Bumble...

Long story short, we are now an item. I cherish my new partner a lot. But there is a funny thing. Sometimes, when we spend time together, we find that our behavior patterns still clash. In spite of all the love we give each other, So far, so normal. What I observed, however, is that some of my own patterns relate back to that old emotional baggage. The one I thought I dumped. But these patterns show up in a different way than earlier. And it is easier to recognize them. But they are still around.

Sometimes, an occurrence rips the band-aid of an old wound inside me, and exposes the scars left behind. In those instances, my instincts tell me to react in the way I used to do. Most times, I am aware and I can change course. But the fact is, that my healing journey is not over. And I wonder, if it ever will be.

Your Emotional Baggage Becomes a Part of You

What this means is, that I lived under a false assumption. I thought that if I put in the work, I can heal my wounds, and my emotional baggage will disappear forever. That is not the case. Entering a new relationship gave me the realization, that my baggage is still there. It feels much lighter than it used to. And because I am aware of it, I can manage to put it aside more often, than not. From time to time, there is a need to rummage around and see what's left in there.

What if we can only reduce our baggage to the size of a small envelope? In that case, the advice to not date people with baggage does not make sense. Because we probably all have baggage. The only difference is, that some people put a lot of work in identifying that baggage. Then they work with it. And in this way, they make it easier to carry around.

As for me, I realized that my life has changed so much again, that it might be time for another round of coaching. Hopefully the last for a long time to come.