

Dandelion Story

This is a story taken from Marsha Linehan's skills manual for Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) adapted from Anthony De Mello's book The Song of the Bird (1984).

A man bought a new house and decided that he was going to have a very beautiful lawn. He worked on it every week, doing everything the gardening books told him to do. His biggest problem was that the lawn always seemed to have dandelions growing where he didn't want them. The first time he found dandelions, he pulled them out. But, alas, they grew back. He went to his local gardening store and bought weed killer. This worked for some time, but after summer rains, alas, he found dandelions again. He worked and pulled and killed dandelions all summer.

The next summer he thought he would have no dandelions at all, since none grew over the winter. But, then, all of the sudden, he had dandelions all over again. This time he decided the problem was with the type of grass. So he spent a fortune and had all new sod put down. This worked for some time and he was very happy. Just as he started to relax, a dandelion came up. A friend told him it was due to the dandelions in the lawns of his neighbors. So he went on a campaign to get all his neighbors to kill all their dandelions.

By the third year, he was exasperated. He still had dandelions. So, after consulting every local expert and garden book, he decided to write the U.S. Department of Agriculture for advice. Surely the experts could help him. After waiting several months, he finally got a letter back. He was so excited. Help at last! He tore open the letter and read the following:

"Dear Sir: We have considered your problem and have consulted all of our experts. After careful consideration, we think we can give you very good advice. Our advice is that you learn to love those dandelions." (Linehan, 1993, p.94)