

“The longer a life, the challenge is not the distance between destinations, but the difficulty of travelling light. My soul’s a portmanteau packed full, one half filled with what was, the other with what is, what should be- Jamie A. Hughes

Our soul is ours. Why is it that we let other people pack it like a trunk? We try and play it safe, and hide from the pains of the world. Escaping into our own personal panic room. It’s our intention to protect our soul from life’s troubles. Protect it from insecurities and disappointments. On top of that, we guard ourselves from exposing the weaknesses and differences than make us who we are as an individual. I call those things that invade our soul: the crud that we put on a burger.

Why a burger? As I said at the end of the last chapter, I had a small experience ordering a burger for someone. They wanted it their way. Yet, I was the one explaining that to the order desk. It was tough and annoying. I don’t know exactly what you like and want. It made me realize that a relationship is a bun. I’m one half with another person. In the middle is the meat of the relationship. That meat is covered with life’s crud.

How do I explain your crud? Back to the burger order. The person I was ordering for stopped me right at the end and said “oh yah, no crud.” No, what? What did that mean? Then I formulated an idea that crud is everything that we have happen to us in life. It’s the stuff that makes you who you are? This crud is spread out on the life we live. Sometimes we even have to share it in relationships.

Maybe, I’ll try to explain it a little further. I don’t know why you’re afraid of some things. I don’t know how you feel in certain situations. All of those experiences make up the crud you put in your relationship. All your fears. All your disappointments, failures, and success.

That crud is loaded into a relationship burger. That's a lot of crud. Two people have to eat it too. Consumed in this relationship burger. This crud will either taste great or really bad.

So, what, who cares, it's just crud. It's just the baggage we all have. The problem is that we want the burger our way. In a relationship there are two halves. Each one brings in similar and different experiences. Together it can be a great meal. Yet, if we bring in hot peppers (breakup) or old ketchup (fears), then the relationship just might not taste that good. Over time, one might lose their appetite for you. It is about sharing yourself in a relationship. Just make sure it's something the other side can swallow.

Sometimes, we just run to the next relationship without a care. I feel people tend to hide in the next one. What if the crud in your life is a time bomb waiting to explode? Do you care who it inconveniences? We say we do. Yet, in time, our problems become their problems because we shared them. Far too often we ask our partner to enjoy the crud. What if it's not their way, style, or taste? You can't give a relationship burger to another with no crud on it.

That is why it's important not to hide who you are. It's important to recognize your baggage, faults, and insecurities. At-least then, you can be honest with yourself and anyone you share them with. Some people believe it's not a sharing thing. My life experiences and baggage are private. I hate to burst your bubble but everything in a relationship is on the table. Patrick, I have secrets I don't need to tell. Sure, but the fallout of those secrets seep into your spouse's life, and into the lives of all the other relationships, you have.

Here is a great example. I heard a story of a fella who wanted kids. His wife did too. Yet, he was adopted. His experience from childhood made him vow to never put a child through that. Through what? In his soul, he never felt right about not being blood to his parents. Not knowing

why his real parents were not there. I think he felt that he was not quite in sync with his adopted parents. He had gained crud from those experiences.

Now, fast forward into his marriage. His wife wanted kids. Unfortunately, they could not conceive. She wanted to adopt. His insecurities said no. I don't think their marriage has ever been the same after that discussion. His private baggage? Not if he wants a healthy marriage. His crud is in their decisions. It affected her hopes and dreams in a negative way.

I know another who was raped. They have shared the full details just to get past it. But, underneath, deep inside their soul, there was more. They have reservations in bed. This has harmed their new relationships sex life. A sacred trust has been busted. Baggage will find a way to go public in silent ways. Those silent ways are the crud they have acquired by being raped.

It's about all that crud we put on a relationship burger. What I'm finding is that we gather it up over time. An incident that happened 20 years ago. A breakup. A harsh word from a loved one. It's all of it. Those life experiences affect us. They become crud that we carry on in our soul. There is a lesson that Jesus recounts in Luke 11. A strong man clears his home of demons. It's swept clean. What happens to a vacant home? Some one moves in. In this story, Jesus says the demons came back and invited more friends to live in the house than before. Try demonic crud in an empty soul.

It's not about wiping the slate clean. My wife always says we can forgive but forgetting, that's a different matter. How often have we heard someone say that they understand why things happen but have a hard time forgiving themselves? We stand in the mirror searching for the truth. People do move on. I bet that most of us can move past, but the memory lingers just enough to make us cautious.

That's where crud comes in. A clean house invites guests. Sometimes we willingly let in crud to replace the things we tried to sweep under the rug. Alcohol, drugs, sex, or a new relationship can all be invited in. Denial, abuse, busyness, and more can walk through the door. Each one creates new crud that we will have to tend to. A soul is never swept clean for long. The demons in our past don't really want to leave. From time to time they will come knocking.

Our crud could be our demons. Some good intended councilor insists we should wipe them out. Could we really bring no baggage into a relationship? There is only one reason I say no. It's that baggage or crud changes you. How you deal with it and how you move forward is another matter. Once bitten, twice shy is a good rule. That's how we learn. The key is learning. I feel baggage becomes lighter when we see it for what it is. However, our demons of the past carry a heavy weight until we recognize them. That heavy weight builds crud.

Rafiki in the Lion King is talking to the lion Simba who had run away from his troubles. He states "you can either run from it or learn from it." Is that really just a line in a movie? Just a kid show? I think the writer experienced that. He or she is sharing. Sharing what? Their baggage. When baggage is ignored, it turns into crud. We put it into other relationships. It changes the burger we share with another person. For some, like Simba, they tried to run away. Yet, there was this nagging lingering feeling in his stomach that something was not right.

Rafiki challenges Simba. The Lion now runs towards his problems instead of from them. Experiences hurt, and fears will always be there. They should mold us into something better. Yet, certainly, some experiences try and crush our soul. We desperately want to sweep the house clean. That is where bad habits come in the form of demons. We think we're ok. We believe we're

doing life well. Only a fool would believe there is nothing to hide. Were human, and humans gather crud all their life.

We have all heard of demons in our closet. Demons of the past. When bad things happen, they attempt to ruin our relationship burger. As children we have dreams and desires of becoming something special. By the time we become adults those dreams and desires get crud on them. Life and people get in the way. It's not like we hoped it would turn out that way. However, crud tends to pile up over time. Why? Because, crud happens.

We are passionate humans. Our desires are very strong in our heart. Teenage dreams are very real. What dreams? A dream of singing, getting married, or becoming an astronaut. Usually it does not go quite as planned. That is where the trouble begins. Those are the disappointments that our heart frowns upon. That can turn into baggage. Hidden crud we bring into a new relationship.

Imagine a fear that you never saw coming. What happens when your hearts dreams and desires are killed? They never really die. We think they do. Yet, deep inside our soul those desires and dreams are still alive. I have heard so many people whisper under their breath "yes, I wanted to be that." Yet, they're not. Inside, damage grows from the fear of never becoming what you hoped for. Why is it that many phycologists bring us back to our childhood? It's because fear and anxiety began there through lost dreams.

Reality check by a Chinese proverb:

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step

Life begins and life moves on one step at a time. I have wondered if we are just crud making machines. Humans have a mind that exaggerates, contemplates, and retaliates. It takes

many years to pile up enough crud to cause trouble. Its why a mid-life crisis happens. We can see death so clearly after 30, 40, or 50 years old. Then we panic. Why? Because all of are hopes and dreams have not come true yet. Their still there waiting inside our hearts. Waiting for what? To win. Yet, the fear of losing because time is running out can create crud and panic. Hence: a mid-life crisis.

What happens when the wrong thing invades our heart? When the baggage begins to seep crud? Basically, the relationship begins to look secondary. People are devoted to a relationship until their troubles get in the way. So, we turn to a drug or another person to make us happy again. Yet, a year down the road were still in the same place. It's totally frustrating. Baggage tends to percolate like a good coffee. Seemingly, waiting for a chance to boil over. It does not care what relationship it spreads crud on.

What is my crud? I have decided to be more honest than ever before. Being honest with me and honest with the wife. I have desires. I need to acknowledge them. I have fears. I need to explore them. One of my "crud" is the fear of losing another relationship. Fear that it is my fault. I am concerned that I am good at many things but not great at anything. Oh, I have crud. Why write if I think I'm not as good as others? It's because I believe practice and fighting my fears are the only way I have a shot.

Let's take a quick look at your crud. What has happened to you that ruined the taste of life? Did you vow to never give your heart again? Were you positive you would be a better parent than yours were? We all have that one. What did you dream of achieving, and why has it not happened? Maybe your lucky and it did. I'm sure something has not worked out. Not everything goes as planned. Crud builds.

I was reading through the life of Steve Jobs the co-founder of Apple. What an interesting timeline. He was adopted. Steve bounced around through several jobs and relationships. It seems he was never secure in one place. Always thinking and always moving from one idea to another. I noticed the women in his life were unsure he could commit. What made him brilliant and slightly unstable all rolled into one? I think it was his unorthodox path to greatness. He gathered a ton of crud along the way. I mention him because he appeared to have it all. Yet, his life journey is littered with transition and struggle. Nothing is what it seems inside a human.

Inside your soul, you have a closet full of junk, crud, or baggage. It's silent but deadly. You will never know what will trigger it. Unfortunately, a relationship is the best way to trigger crud. How can we avoid a messy relationship burger full of crud? It begins with honesty. It begins with valuing the other side. They have crud too. ABBA got it right "knowing me, knowing you is the best I can do." Desire to know who you are. To see your faults, mistakes, and differences as building blocks that make you who you are. They are not the enemy.

Take your relationship burger and realize your just half of it. Never try and return, take back, or exchange your crud. It is part of you now. All we end up doing is making more crud and piling it on. It creates a sloppy life that spills over into someone else's world. In the end, it's another bad tasting relationship caused partly by the handling of your crud.

The other side of the bun is their life. Their hopes and dreams. Who are they? It's your spouse, co-worker and friends. All the people you have relationships with. They have crud too. When we can cope with our own, then we can have compassion towards another person's crud. A good relationship begins well when we care more about the individual rather than their crud.

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Chapter 13 (Crud)

I had a friend who hated her mother's crud. She believed it was part of who she is too. I encouraged her to embrace it. use it for good. We all carry some form of crud. It is a burden. Yet, we can embrace it. Some public speakers fear speaking. They are fueled by the fear they feel. It's their dragon to slay. They always have the fear, yet each speaking engagement is a victory over an old foe. They recognize their crud and work with it instead of against it.

If we know our crud then we have half a chance at a good relationship. If we take the time to help others with their crud, we just might have another half of a chance at a good relationship. If we treat a relationship as a burger then here is the fun part. Possibly we can add a little crud rather than a lot. Maybe you can even pick your own things to add. Why have a relationship dictated by past crud?

I was crushed in divorce. There was crud piling up all over the place. I hid for 5 years alone. Yet, I held hope of being married one day. I grew a ton. My life does not resemble a fraction of what it was. There are so many differences. I have embraced me, and that has been tough work. Yet, I can control my crud much better in this new marriage. I actually feel bad for the Ex. I was reckless in the past with my baggage.

I had parents that berated my abilities: crud. There were teachers that doubted my skills: crud. There were many people I called friends and lovers that cheated on me: crud. Yet, at times, there were a few who told me to run faster. To dream harder. To suck it up and use my fears for good. The good people in my life never once told me to get rid of the crud I had gained. They did; however, ask me to never quit.

I believe we have the ability to make a better relationship burger. At-least our half could be tasty. The alternative is much, much worse. Who wants to wake up one day and realize your

burger is empty? What happens when there is too much crud? People are people and that's a tiger on its own. Why make it worse by adding crud we did not have to. Relationships deserve better than that. We meet many people in our lives that change us for better or worse. A chance meeting can gain unwanted crud. Let's breathe. It's time to head towards solutions. People are messy. Relationships are messy. Yet, are they dumb luck? Let's find out.