

Healing the Past...Letting Go of Hurts

By Barbara Ashcroft B.A. M.ED

Are you stuck in the past? When we continue to dwell on and to relive all the events in life that have brought us pain and sorrow, we will never enjoy the precious current moment, nor will we be able to move forward to new beginnings. Constantly picking at old wounds, prevents us from healing and from becoming whole again.

At some time in life, all of us will experience a particular type of loss whether it is in our careers, our relationships, our health or in the death of a loved one. I really don't know anyone who hasn't had to deal with bitter disappointment and sadness at one time or another. Loss is really a natural part of the life cycle and it is our reaction to it that determines if and when we move on to a brighter future. If we accept the fact that nothing in this world ever lasts forever, we will better appreciate the now moment at hand and we will also know when it is time to let go.

Grieving

Grief is like a long, winding tunnel whose entrance is closed behind you and the only way out is through it. Martha Tousley

We all need to grieve and work through the pain of our losses, and the length of time this takes for each of us will vary. Some of us have lengthy crying sessions; some find solace in support groups; others mourn quietly and retreat for a while, while there are those who are fortunate enough to have a compassionate listening ear of a devoted friend. When we are in the midst of our crises and pain, it is very difficult for us to imagine that our lives will ever be normal again. The good news, however, is that most of us do recover. We begin to come to terms with our loss and focus on what positive things still exist in our lives. Do you remember any time in the past when you wondered how you would ever get through a specific painful life event? But here you are now a survivor, and you will do it again.

When the heart grieves over what it has lost, the spirit rejoices over what it has left.
Sufi Epigram

Holding On

What you resist persists. When you fight something, you're tied to it forever. As long as you're fighting it, you're giving it power. Anthony DeMello

What are you holding on to that is keeping you from being the joyful and productive person you know you can be? What unhappy past memories keep reappearing in the present? What is stealing your joy? Perhaps you are not even aware that you are filled with resentment, anger, and bitterness. Maybe you now see yourself as a victim of life's

circumstances. Staying in any of these mind modes for lengthy periods will surely kill your spirit and zap your energy. Harboring and focusing on resentment may eventually permeate your every day actions, become a permanent way of life and destroy your beautiful spirit within. Holding on to resentment over the past, prevents you from enjoying the present. When you keep replaying old tapes, there is no room for new recordings. You are allowing the past to control you, and are giving power over to whomever you feel hurt you. Do you think that person is still giving you any thought? So who is really losing here? By keeping your resentment alive you are preventing your spirit from healing. Physical ailments may also begin to appear as your body responds to all that negative energy. Debbie Ford in her book, *The Secret of the Shadow*, reminds us that "as long as we are blaming others for our circumstances, we have no freedom, because our resentment keeps us bound to the very people-and the very circumstances-we dislike." Resentment will eventually destroy us.

Resentment is like venom that continues to pour through your system, doing its poisonous damage long after being bitten by the snake. It's not the bite that kills you; it's the venom. Wayne Dyer

Signs of Being Stuck in the Past

Pay attention to your conversations. Do you bring up your old past hurts in every conversation you have with your friends or family? Do you still feel outraged and full of anger when you recall a certain memory from your past? Does your mind focus on old resentments throughout the day? Are you defensive and bitter about certain topics that take you back to your past? Do you feel heavy in spirit, lethargic and unmotivated? Are your friends getting tired of your old self-pity or victim story? Have they started to avoid you? Are they telling you to move on? Most people are very supportive and will listen to your past story for even a year or so, but when they do not see you taking any action steps to improve your life, they often become exhausted and begin to feel drained by your old conversation. Are you **yourself** getting fed up with playing your old tapes? When you get to this point, you know it's time to let go. There is nothing any of us can do about the past except learn from it.

The wake of your life is like the wake of a boat. It's nothing more than a trail that's left behind. The wake is not driving your life. Wayne Dyer

Forgiveness-the way out

This is really a tough one when we think of all the hurt and pain that we often attribute to the actions of another. It is, however, the only way for any of us to heal and move on. Think about it this way. As M. Scott Peck says "the reason to forgive others is not for their sake...the reason to forgive is for our **own** sake, for our own health." This does not mean that when we forgive that we will immediately forget a painful transgression. We are also not condoning any such actions taken against us, but at least we now make

up our minds to come to terms with it and let go of the anger. Forgiveness is really an attitude that determines whether the hurt will continue or the healing will commence. Forgiveness benefits the one who forgives. Though the memories may still hurt, we now refuse to let them dominate us. Forgiveness says, "I am done spending any more time and energy on this past event." It is a sure sign of our wanting to move forward.

Not forgiving and holding onto a resentment is like having a wound which you check every day to see if it is healing. Each day you open it up to look, and sure enough it is not any better. To heal from a wound you must stop opening it every day. To heal from hurt you must stop reliving it every day. You must learn to let go. Daniel H. Johnston

Finally Breaking Free

As we begin to forgive, we start to feel a sense of peace and contentment, a knowing that life has better things in store for us when we let go of the past. We realize how much of our time has been taken up with dwelling on events that we can never change or redo. We take comfort in knowing that each of us has always done the very best we knew at that time and we finally stop the "what if's and if only's". We make up our minds to refuse to let any upset from the past spoil our present moments. We choose to focus on the now, the most precious thing there is. We begin to see the gifts that each small moment has to offer us. When we open our minds to new possibilities, friendships and experiences, we suddenly feel the joy of a renewed life at our doorstep. As we release our ties to the past, we start to breathe in fresh new energy. We become lighter in spirit and feel more fully alive. Finally, we see the beauty in life again.

And it can be guaranteed that once we stop clinging to the old, and take the leap of faith to let go, one of two things will happen: either a ledge will appear or we will be given wings to fly. Betty Hill Crowson

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