

THE ART OF RELEASING

("Letting go of my negative beliefs and emotions")

Learning to let go of my thoughts and emotions is a process of exploring what certain emotions are doing *to* me (and others) and *for* me, and then deciding whether I want to *keep* the emotion or *let it go*. It is important to recognize that my ego does not *want* to let go of, much less *acknowledge*, certain feelings. My ego has an investment in holding on and maintaining a pretense. My ego wants to be right, and my ego would rather justify keeping my feelings no matter how destructive they are to my peace of mind. No one is going to talk me out of my feelings. But when **I** can fully evaluate what my negative thoughts and emotions are doing *to* me and *for* me, then **I** (not my ego) can make the decision whether to let go. To fully evaluate my emotions is to understand that the only obstacle to letting go is fear. I am afraid of what will happen or what will continue to happen. But when I look closely and honestly, what I am afraid *will* happen *is already happening*.

The truth is I want peace of mind and the truth is that holding on to my negative feelings is the source of my unhappiness. When I seek peace outside of myself, I am destined to be continually upset. That is because my ego's "game" is simply "keep trying to change things that you cannot change." My ego wants me to believe that my peace of mind is "someday", in the future, when things/conditions/people/I change. My ego keeps saying, "I can't be happy until..." My ego actually believes that holding on to my negative feelings is what's going to create change "so keep working on the feelings but do not let them go." My ego does not want me to recognize that my happiness is available to me right here and now and is a function of letting go of my negative feelings.

There is certainly nothing "wrong" with striving or asking for what I want and to establish positive conditions in my life, but the simple truth is that my happiness is not *dependent* on it. In actual fact, if there is any one obstacle to *having* the things I truly want, it is because I am not in touch with my own joy and happiness. My first order of business is therefore "be happy" and all good things will follow.

To be happy is to be at peace within myself. Being at peace is learning to give up the effort of trying to be something I am not. I am not an ego and I am not an image. I can never be something that I am not. And trying to be something I am not translates into the effort of trying to *change* others into something they are not. The "war" that seems to be occurring in my relationship is a function of the war that is going on inside. Trying to "solve" the war by trying to change the external conditions through attack, blame and control never works because the source of the conflict is not outside. I will not settle the war or find peace with another until I find peace within myself.

So, I needn't wait for the conditions of my life to change to be happy! I can get to the *source* of my unhappiness and then learn to let it go. That source is my negative thoughts and emotions.

So lets take a moment to identify certain thoughts and feelings and discover what they are doing *to* you and *for* you as well as your fears of letting go. Go back to "My Emotions and Thoughts" page where you considered your most troubling area and look at the highlighted thoughts and emotions, especially the ones that are persistent. Read them to yourself a few times and then respond to the following questions as honestly and as completely as you can. As an alternative you can take any present emotion or situation which is troubling you.

Identifying My Thoughts and Emotions

Context: In which area of my life do I seem to be troubled?		
<input type="checkbox"/> My Marriage	<input type="checkbox"/> My Financial Situation	<input type="checkbox"/> My Alcohol/Drug Use
<input type="checkbox"/> My Primary Relationship	<input type="checkbox"/> My Spiritual Life	<input type="checkbox"/> My Social Life
<input type="checkbox"/> My Work	<input type="checkbox"/> My Inner Life	<input type="checkbox"/> My Past
<input type="checkbox"/> My Family of Origin	<input type="checkbox"/> My Education	<input type="checkbox"/> My Future
<input type="checkbox"/> My Current Family	<input type="checkbox"/> My Communication	<input type="checkbox"/> My Body
In one or two sentences, what do I seem to be most troubled about?		

What is the name of the person involved, if any? _____		

What am I feeling?	What am I telling myself? What is my inner conversation? What do I believe is so? What do I say, "should" or "should not" be
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

1. **How long have I had these feelings and thoughts?** When can I first recall having these feelings?

2. **What *behaviors* do I act out when I have these feelings?** Do I try to control? Do I try to be "right"? Do I "justify" myself? Do I punish someone? Do I blame? Do I play being a "victim"? Do I try to be "safe"? Do I try to "fix" someone? Do I "hide" or "pretend"? Do I avoid? Do I try to "dominate" someone?

3. **What is it doing *to* me to have these feelings and thoughts?** What is the *impact* on my life? how do these emotions affect me? Do these feelings help me or hurt me? Do these feelings bring me pain and misery or joy and happiness? Do these feelings bring me closer to what I want in life or do they hold me back? What is the *cost* of having these feelings?

4. While we don't like to think that we are getting some *payoff* out of maintaining certain emotions, consider that there is something that you "get" or *attempt* to "get" out of having these feelings. **What is it doing *for me* to have these feelings?** What am I trying to *get* by having these emotions? Is it working?

5. **What is a possible difference it could make to my life if these feelings disappeared?** What would the disappearance of these feelings make available to me? Is there any fear in *not* having these feelings?

6. **Who do I say is responsible for these feelings?** What are my *beliefs* about who is responsible? And who is *really* responsible for these feelings. Who is choosing these emotions? Can I *take* responsibility for these feelings?

7. **How long do I really want to hang on to these feelings?** For the rest of my life? For a few more years? For a few more weeks? A few more days? A few more hours, minutes, seconds? Or, no longer?

8. **Is it possible for me to let go of my negative thoughts and feelings?**

9. **Am I willing to let go?**

10. **When?** (*Be* with the feelings until they are gone)

11. **Are they gone?** Completely? Am I willing to let go of my negative thoughts and feelings *completely*? Are they gone now?

12. **What am I feeling *right now*?** How am I seeing my situation now? How *could* I see my situation? Can I see my situation in a new light now?

13. Can I imagine never, ever having these feelings again? **Can I let go of any attachment that I *must* or *will* have these feelings again?**

14. Can I imagine *always* having these feelings? **Can I let go of any *fears* of these feelings coming back?**
15. If I could replace these feelings with a *new possibility* that would really make a difference in my life, what would I like to *feel*? How would I like to *be*? What is another way that I could *see* this situation? Or, is there another way I could *think* about this situation? **If I *could* replace those negative feelings with a new possibility, what would I replace them with?**
16. **Am I *willing* to allow these new feelings into my awareness now?**