

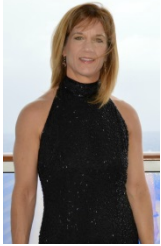
“No matter how badly people treat you, never drop down to their level, just know you’re better and walk away.”

- **Unknown**

This is a really great quote to think about because sometimes the people you care about the most hurt you the deepest. It often comes out of nowhere. And when it happens, you find yourself at a loss for what to do. But sometimes, no matter how difficult it is, you truly do have to just walk away and move on. I think we all really struggle with walking away from people we love. But sometimes, it’s the only answer. Then over time, the hurt begins to heal and we can begin the process of forgiveness.

A couple months ago, I wrote about detoxing the body. This month, I’m going to talk about the most important step for detoxing the mind. If you need some help, be sure to reach out to me to get you started.

Yours in health,



Susan Monaco, Certified Health Coach
Health and Wellness by Design
www.healthnwellnessbydesign.com
susan@healthnwellnessbydesign.com

The Importance of Forgiveness



We’ve all had our share of pain and heartache, but some of us deal with it better than others. It’s never easy when someone hurts or betrays you, but the million dollar question is: how do you move past it? I’m going to give you some suggestions I hope will help. Unfortunately, I’ve had to take my own advice and I’m glad I did. It actually takes a really strong and loving person to be able to forgive.

I recently read something interesting: *“Grab a plate and throw it down. Okay, done. Did it break? Yes. Now say sorry to it. Sorry. Did it go back to the way it was before? No. Do you understand?”*

When people hurt us, they think saying they’re sorry will fix it. But that’s not always the case because things can never go back to how they were before the hurt happened. Sometimes the damage caused needs more than a simple “I’m sorry.” Actions must speak louder than words. We can say anything to anyone, but do we actually have the desire to back up those words with action? That’s the true measure of how sorry someone is and whether they actually mean it. But we can’t control others. We can only control ourselves and how we handle things. So part of detoxing your mind starts with forgiveness. But how do we forgive someone who hurt us?

Forgiving someone can be really tough and it can be a huge risk. But each of us has the ability to free others, as well as ourselves, from the guilt and pain of an unnecessary and unexpected hurt. Most people don’t realize that when we forgive someone, we’re actually performing a small miracle that sometimes no one notices but us. That’s ok. Forgiveness is something we do alone, we do quietly, we do in private and we do by choice. No one can force us to forgive someone. And no one can force them to accept that we’ve forgiven them. Sometimes, the person who hurt you doesn’t want to accept that fact that you’ve forgiven. Forgiving is something we CHOOSE to do and then we act on it. But the thing is, when we finally take the step of forgiving someone for something they said or did, it allows us to start to heal from the undeserved hurt we suffered.

I learned about forgiving from my father, who never held anything against anyone. He told me that hanging onto resentments would only hurt ME. Forgiving was an “inside job.” I alone had the power to forgive. No one could make me do it. But I had to make that choice. It’s not easy. Sometimes forgiving someone is the hardest thing you’ll ever do. This is especially true if the person who hurt or betrayed you is family or someone you love. It might have happened yesterday, last month, last year, or maybe even what seems like a lifetime ago. Maybe the person who hurt you is dead. It doesn’t matter when it happened. But the sad thing is that it hurt you enough to impact your life and to be burned forever into your memory. You’re not alone. We’ve all been there. When we invest our hearts into other people and relationships, we inevitably get hurt because when we care about others, we open ourselves to the wounds of someone else’s cruel words, disloyalty or betrayal. Sometimes we can ignore them and brush them away like a fly that lands on our arm while we’re sitting on our deck enjoying a beautiful day. But some hurts don’t go away so easily. They stick with us like glue and it’s hard to let them go.

Forgiving is tough work and it’s a big risk. In a way, it seems unnatural because it feels like people should pay for hurting us. I remember the story of how Pope John Paul walked into a prison in Rome in 1984 to meet the man who tried to kill him. He took the man’s hand into his and forgave him. I know, the Pope is basically a professional forgiver, right? He kind of HAS to forgive everyone for everything. That’s his job. But what about us mere mortals? We have to ask ourselves whether the person who hurt us is worth forgiving and if we decide they are, how do we do it?

Much like grief, I think that when someone hurts us, we have to go through various phases to heal and eventually forgive. Like with grief, we may not go through the phases in any particular order. We may even repeat some of them and that’s ok. Everyone is different and must heal in their own way and in their own time. But we can’t truly heal until we forgive. So here are the stages I think we have to experience to forgive someone who’s hurt us.

1. **Pain.** When someone hurts you, it hurts like hell. If the hurt you’re feeling is impacting your happiness, you’re at the pain stage. Most likely, only those closest to you may know how you’re feeling. But even they may not know how much it actually hurts. We may even try to deny our pain. But ignoring it only makes it worse in the long run. We must acknowledge it, feel it and deal with it to let it go. I deal with my pain by crying. Letting loose a river of pent-up tears can start the healing process. A good cry can cleanse the soul and release the emotional burden we’re holding. Talking to a trusted friend can also help.
2. **Anger.** It’s normal to be mad when someone hurts us. It’s even worse if it was undeserved. Anger is a negative emotion and my dad warned me against it. But the reality is, it’s a normal reaction. It ultimately forces us to change our response to what made us mad. This can give us the energy to do something to make things better. My dad told me we can’t let others control our emotions. We must control them ourselves and CHOOSE to let them go.
3. **Healing.** How do you heal when you’ve been hurt so much your heart aches? I think the first step is to take your thoughts away from the person who needs to be forgiven. When you forgive someone for hurting you, you can finally let go of what hurt you. Detach the person who hurt you from the pain he or she caused. Then let it go. Once you’ve done that, your heart can begin to heal. Then allow a good memory about that person back into your thoughts. This will lessen the pain of the bad memory or event. Remember, as you forgive, you start to see a clearer truth about the person who hurt you. This allows you to separate them from what they did or said. You’ll know you’re on the path to forgiveness when you can think about the person who hurt you and you wish them well. Forgiveness is the cure for pain and anger and it invites healing.
4. **Reconnection.** Can you ever reestablish the relationship? Both parties, (the “hurter” and the “hurtee”), must be willing to let down the wall that’s been separating them. Then they can take that first step over the broken-down wall. If both parties can’t do it, as long as YOU can, it will bring you inner peace. It doesn’t mean you need to restart the relationship. It simply means that if you run into each other, you can have a conversation and feel no ill will. But maybe you’ll both decide to reconnect and move forward together. If that happens, hopefully important lessons were learned in the process.

When we forgive, it doesn’t mean we forget. We can’t forgive people for things we’ve forgotten. We must remember what was done or said to us, but it doesn’t have to impact our daily lives any more. Forgiving means we’re no longer bound by the pain and anger left by someone’s words or actions. They no longer hold us captive. The great thing about forgiving is that at the end of the day, it gives us the opportunity to heal from the hurt we didn’t deserve in the first place. We may never understand why we were hurt. But when we forgive, we don’t have to understand. People who forgive don’t pretend they weren’t hurt. Forgiveness is love’s antidote for pain and anger. Forgiveness is beautiful because it truly brings healing to the saddest of all pains.

Have a wonderful month.