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## Letting Go



Two Buddhist monks return to their monastery after the rains. They reach a swollen river and in front of them is a beautiful woman in a delicate silk kimono, distressed because she is unable to cross the river by herself. The older monk scoops her up and carries her safely to the other side and the two monks continue their way in silence. Later, as the monks reach their destination, the younger monk having fumed for the last 5 hours finally bursts out, "How could you do it? We're not allowed to touch a woman!" The older monk, surprised, replies, "I put her down 5 hours ago, but you are still carrying her with you."

- As with the younger monk in the story, the things we hold onto (eg. that we feel angry, hurt, and guilty about) cloud our minds and prevent us from fully enjoying life. The irony is that whatever you're holding onto, it's probably bothering you much more than it does anyone else.
- Letting go usually involves some form of forgiveness or acceptance - whether it's of yourself, someone else, a situation, or even an unknown third party.
- Letting go doesn't mean we condone a situation or behavior, it's about lightening OUR load. When we let go of whatever is bothering us, we set ourselves free - and get to reclaim that energy for ourselves.
- You don't need to know HOW to let go, you just need to be WILLING. And while you can't change the past, you can learn from it and change how you feel going forwards.
- Remember - whatever you find hardest to let go of is probably what you need to let go of the most...

### INSTRUCTIONS:

While you may not wish to do anything about these right now, just listing what you need to let go of here will raise your level of awareness and you'll naturally begin to loosen your grip. So, simply list below what you're holding onto, what slows you down, what riles you up, and anything that gets in the way of you being the best you can be...

\* If you're struggling with identifying a benefit (there must be *something* or you wouldn't be holding on to it) ask yourself, "What do I gain by keeping hold of this?" Perhaps by holding on to resentments, anger, and hurt you don't need to accept your part in the situation. Perhaps it stops you from feeling how hurt you really were or maybe you get to stay in 'the right' or avoid dealing with someone.

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***TIP: If you need to let go of something **YOU'VE** done ask, "What do I need to do that will allow me to let this go?" Perhaps you need to make notes in your journal of what you've learned, perhaps you need to make some kind of amends, apologize, or find a meaningful way to make it up to yourself or someone else. We can't change the past, but we can make amends and learn from it.***

What do I need to let go of?	How I benefit by 'holding on' *
1. ....	.....
2. ....	.....
3. ....	.....
4. ....	.....
5. ....	.....
6. ....	.....
7. ....	.....
8. ....	.....
9. ....	.....
10. ....	.....

Just for a second, imagine letting go of everything on this list. How does it feel? .....

What have I learned about myself from doing this exercise? .....