

The Healing Power of Forgiveness

*To forgive is the highest and most beautiful form of love.
In return, you will receive untold peace and happiness.*
(Robert Muller)

Have you truly forgiven your parents yet for any emotional pain and distress they inadvertently inflicted on you when you were a small, vulnerable child? What about your first love who broke your heart or your grown-up son or daughter who hardly ever contacts you?

Gloria and I have just returned home from leading two five day retreats in Assisi. The first retreat was supposed to be about the most impactful lessons from A Course in Miracles and the second retreat was meant to be about cultivating the Eight Pillars of Joy. But weirdly, the key theme of both retreats ended up being all about practising forgiveness of ourselves and others and letting go of any grievances we were still holding from the past.

So with both retreats still very fresh in my mind, I thought I would share with you this month some thoughts about the amazing healing power of true forgiveness.

It is a weird fact about human beings that we all tend to hang onto past grievances long after the hurtful incident should have faded from our memory. Can you still remember for example, feeling hurt when you were still in primary school by something a teacher or fellow pupil said or did to you? I can! Or what about past partners who abandoned you or betrayed your trust in them at some point in your relationship? Ouch! It still hurts doesn't it, all these years later?

Now painful memories are one thing, but if we still feel angry or aggrieved at what happened to us many years ago, we are basically poisoning our whole system with toxic life-destroying energy of anger/hatred. As Anne Lamott once said, *Not forgiving is like taking rat poison and then waiting for the rat to die.* You don't believe me? Well what about this true story from Alan Cohen?

Alan Cohen tells the almost unbelievable story of an elderly cancer patient who was lying in hospital not long from death. She then somehow totally forgave her sister whom she had not spoken to for over 20 years. She made amends with her sister, released the anger she had been holding against her for all those years, and her cancer completely disappeared to the absolute astonishment of her doctors.

This story clearly illustrates the deep truth that holding onto grievances is toxic and that forgiveness heals the person doing the forgiving. What the other person does with being forgiven is entirely up to them.

If you are still a little sceptical about this, and I cannot say I blame you, it may help if I tell you a little about the energy attached to holding grievances. Every emotion we ever entertain has a specific energy attached to it. Some emotions create a high, positive energy in our system whilst others create a low, negative flow of energy within us.

We can even give numbers to these different types of energy within us. If the number 200 represents the level at which our energy supports life, then any emotion that calibrates below 200 is fundamentally bad for us. Now according to David R. Hawkins, the energy of stored anger/hatred calibrates at only 150 which means that it does not support our life here on earth. Courage on the other hand calibrates at 200 and forgiveness at 350 which demonstrates how incredibly good it is for us to find the courage to forgive those who hurt us in the past.

From my own long experience of going through many healing sessions with Master Jason Chan, I know that releasing long-stored angry energy feels so liberating. After I have released a specific stored grievance from my system, my body usually feels a lot lighter, my mind feels more peaceful, and my heart feels much more open, loving and joyful

The key element in the forgiveness process is simply being ready and willing to release any long-held grievance filled with anger/hatred from our system. Once we are ready to forgive, all we then need to do is to pray for higher assistance, and I assure you that we will be helped to forgive that particular person or event in a way that really suits us.

If you would like to try a specific method for letting go of any long-held grievances, I can highly recommend sitting quietly for a while mindfully and slowly breathing in and out. As you breathe out, you imagine releasing the toxic, dark energy of a particular stored grievance from your heart and mind. Just imagine the energy of that grievance as a puff of dark smoke rising upwards and dissolving into bright sunlight. Then as you breathe in again, you imagine filling every cell in your being with the healing, empowering energy of unconditional love and compassion for your wounded self and for the individual or group of people who hurt you.

If you are not particularly skilled at meditating, no problem! You can put a search into YouTube to find a guided meditation on forgiveness that really appeals to you. I looked on YouTube the other day and found two guided meditations on forgiveness by two great modern spiritual teachers: Louise Hay and Jack Kornfield.

The exact method you choose to assist you to forgive anyone and everyone who may have hurt you in the past is really not that important. The key here is to find

the motivation to do this healing work and for me the core motivation is how good it feels to replace the dark, heavy, toxic energy of anger, hatred and attack with the uplifting, life-supporting energy of love and compassion.

At heart, it is all so simple. The energy of fear and anger destroys life. The energy of love creates life. Fear and anger weaken our mind, body, and heart. Love energy uplifts our mind, body and heart. Grievances make us sick. Forgiveness heals us on all possible levels.

I am pretty sure that you are really careful about your diet and about exercising regularly in order to protect and strengthen your health as you age. But if you are holding onto any kind of grievances from your past, you are still inadvertently flooding your whole system with an energy that is powerfully destructive. On the other hand, if you bravely let your grievances go, you are doing one of the most powerful things you can ever do to protect your health today and in the future.

Please just trust me on this, because I long for you to lead an exceptionally healthy and fulfilling life for as long as you possibly can. I now know without a shadow of a doubt that letting go of all our grievances is one of the most effective ways to protect our health – far more effective than giving up chocolates, chips, wine, or the occasional G&T so I really want to pass on this life-saving information to as many dear friends as I possibly can.

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