

Victimhood

LESSON 2



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Why is the victim mentality so dangerous?

When difficult and unjust things happen to us - a difficult childhood, a betrayal, an illness, a significant loss - we react with upset, anger and grief. These are natural emotions letting us know that these events have injured us, and it is time to heal.

Sometimes, we get stuck in a state of shock and victimization. We no longer feel safe in the world and tend to blame our circumstances, other people, the spiritual world, history, etc. for the difficult emotions and events we are experiencing. We quickly form limiting beliefs. "The world sucks", "all men/women are terrible", "you can't trust anyone".

While it's important to address injustice and let ourselves grieve, getting stuck in a victim mentality makes you a victim and in essence powerless.

I've seen it again and again that clients who see themselves as victims struggle with depression, anger, and a profound sense of helplessness. It's like quicksand - you don't get out.

"Every cloud has a silver lining".

It's a song I heard over and over again when my children started watching Thomas the Train. My grandmother would say "all things can turn to good". That was a powerful belief that served me well during several tragedies in my life. The belief that suffering can turn into wisdom, misfortune into deeper compassion with others, injustice into courage and strength, has helped me be open to wait and work for the sun behind the clouds to come out again.

Think of the people you admire. What is/was their underlying belief about themselves and the world? Chances are these people believed that things could change and it was worth it to fight for what they held dear. These kinds of beliefs have propelled so many of the people we admire.

VICTIMHOOD

3

LESSON 2

1. Who do you know that persisted in spite of setbacks? Write down some names.

2. What are the beliefs/characteristics of this person/people?

3. When something difficult has happened to you, what are the feelings you experience?

4. Can you accept these feelings as your truth of the moment?

5. What do these feelings want you to know?

6. How might this experience help you grow?

VICTIMHOOD

4

LESSON 2

7. What important qualities do you want to embody now?

8. How would you want to feel in 5 years from now?

Write down a list of beliefs that you currently have about yourself and the world:

Look at each belief and wonder how you could change it to help you out of the victim mentality:

E.g. "People are so disappointing"

"I've had some tough experiences with people that took advantage of me. I'm learning to be more discerning and to trust myself. I'm learning to trust others as I see fit."

"The world is a scary place"

"I've been hurt in life and I'm learning to understand that not all people or situations are safe. More and more I understand whom to trust and how to keep myself safe"

If you struggle with this exercise talk to someone that can do this exercise with you.

LESSON 2

Heal your hurt self:

Imagine talking and comforting your hurt self. You can visualize this like an inner movie, eg. hugging and comforting you inner child or inner teen and listen and talk to them.

You can also write a message/letter to your hurt self.

It could start like this:

"I'm so sorry you are having such a difficult time. I realize this situation feels really tough right now, yet it will not last forever. Things can change. You are not weak for being upset, you are just feeling a lot of feelings. You are going to get through this and I'm here to help...."

Other ideas:

Start a gratitude journal and write in it every day. Nothing shifts our misery as much as noticing what's already good in our life. It can be as simple as: Running water, sun shine, a roof over our head...

Work on acceptance and forgiveness. Being angry at your former boss/friend/ex-lover/yourself,... might feel important, but accepting and moving on shifts your sense of possibility and self worth. Set small goals and give yourself plenty of praise when you reach them. Celebrate you.

Make a commitment to stop complaining and compliment yourself every time you shift.

Reach out, volunteer, find people who are engaged in positive actions and join them. This might seem scary at first, especially if you've been withdrawn. Notice your courage, take small steps and be amazed at yourself.

"Above all, be the heroine of your life, not the victim". Nora Efron

"A wise woman refuses to be anyone's victim". Maya Angelou

Reading recommendation: "Self Compassion" by Kristin Neff

If you are open to a spiritual book; "You can heal your life" by Louise Hay

For Trauma: "The body keeps the score" by Bessel Van der Kolk