

Chapter 6

Forgiveness

Forgiveness heals. Letting go of resentment is the key to complete recovery from your disordered eating, exercise and body dissatisfaction. Forgiveness is not a one-time process. It is something that must become a part of your daily life if you want to heal completely.

Marion Williamson, world-renowned author and activist for forgiveness in the world feels that human beings irrationally expect to go through the process of forgiveness once and be over it. This is not the way forgiveness works. To expect that you can forgive once and then simply put the practice of forgiveness aside is like looking at your physical body three years after you stop doing physical activity. You look at your body one day and say, “Gee, I don’t know what happened, I used to go to the gym every day.” (Marion Williamson, “Return To Love”) It is just as unrealistic to think your body will stay the same if you never move it again as it is to think that you can forgive only once and never have to do it again. Because you are human your feelings of anger and resentment are part of your human condition. Anger is a normal human emotion that you must learn to recognize, acknowledge, feel, understand and release. When you really forgive you accept what is and live your life free from struggle and obsession. You initiate the actions you need to take in order change. You rarely think about your problem as you cease to recognize it as a problem. You discover that your struggle has meaning and that it is not about what you think it is about. The truth is, the pain you feel that you think is connected with your disordered eating and body hatred is really not about that at all. The pain you go through with your food, weight and body image is really about your unresolved resentment from your past.

Paths to forgiveness are many, but there are no short cuts. In order to forgive completely you must examine your past and everyone and everything in it that you may hold resentment toward. The work you need to do in order to forgive can sometimes be painful. It takes time energy and courage. If you were victimized in any way by anyone or anything in your past, you may continue to re-victimize yourself if you hold on to resentment. The person or situation that initially victimized you remains in control as long as you hold on to your anger. When you carry resentment it makes your wound even deeper. Although you don’t have much control over what happens to you and others in life, you can learn to control your responses and feelings.

Facing your painful past experiences can be hard, but in order to forgive and heal you must face it all. To forgive you must feel the emotional energy you have held from the wounds you experienced in the past. You must remember and express your anger, pain, and grief. If you bury your feelings and do no talk about what happened, you will only make yourself and others in the world suffer more. The suffering caused by your abuser or the painful situation you went through continues through your own thoughts, actions, and feelings. The energy you put out into the world will lack compassion for yourself and

others. Eventually your buried resentment will make you either mentally or physically ill. The well known Psychoanalyst, Carl Jung, said “to cherish secrets and hold back emotion is a psychic misdemeanor for which nature finally revisits with sickness.”

Perhaps the resentments you hold go far into the past to a time that you cannot remember. If you were a child at the time your wounding occurred this is probably the case. You know that something hurtful happened to you because you still struggle with resentment toward yourself and others. Buried resentment is always present if you remain stuck in your out-of-control reacting and thinking concerning your eating and body problems. It is important to know that allowing yourself to feel and express your unresolved emotion will heal your pain and suffering even if you are not clear about what actually occurred in your past. You do not need to remember the details about what happened to you in order to heal your pain and suffering. Your body, mind and emotions will tell you what occurred in your past. Your truth is whatever you imagine and feel to be true for you. You can trust your mind, body, spirit, and emotions to heal you. What matters is that you free yourself and others by acknowledging and releasing the pain and anger you have held since your trauma or wounding occurred.

If you suffered as a child you probably feel guilt for what happened even if you were not responsible for it. You may feel guilt or shame if you witnessed another’s abuse or trauma as well. It is normal for young children to feel they are the center of the universe. Young children are not always able to distinguish between the other person or situation and themselves. This is why when a painful or traumatic event occurs in a child’s life there is a strong tendency toward self-blame. When something bad happens to a child or someone they care about, they tend to feel guilt and shame. If their trauma is not resolved they continue to feel guilt and shame throughout their lives. As adults, if they do not resolve their feelings they will not only shame themselves, but they will also shame others. This is how the painful experience of abuse is carried from one generation to the next.

The path to stopping the endless cycle of abuse, pain and suffering is to remember, feel, and express the anger, pain, grief, and shame that surround the painful events of your past. You can then free yourself and others from the pain and suffering. It seems paradoxical that you must feel and express your rage, pain, and grief in order to become free of it. However, the path of forgiveness is a spiritual and emotional journey you must take by going through your pain and suffering and coming to a place of peace, understanding, and acceptance.

Healing Lesson # 12

Put yourself in an environment where you feel safe and comforted. Take a moment to surrender the following process to your Higher Power or Higher Self and ask for help and support.

Take out a sheet of paper. Thoroughly examine your past and everyone and everything in it that you may hold resentment toward, and list these on your sheet of paper. Make sure

to include yourself, God (Higher Power and /or Self), your family, past and present friends, enemies, authority figures, lovers, spouses, teachers, the culture, the “system”, circumstances, and events. If you feel resentment but you are not sure where your feelings come from, or for whom they might be directed toward, write about your feelings in a stream of consciousness manner. Get all your resentment out on paper. Trust what ever comes into your consciousness as you write. If you don't remember what happened, what does your intuition, body, emotion, and heart tell you? Trust this part of you to know the answers for you. Do not question the reality of the intuition of your heart and mind. Simply allow yourself to be with what ever comes up.

Healing Lesson # 13

Congratulations, you have taken the most difficult step up the path to forgiveness. Now that you have brought your resentments into your consciousness you can heal them all. Ask yourself, if you let go of these resentments, how your life might be different. Write about how you imagine your life will be without these resentments.

Now, share your awareness and feelings concerning what happened to you with a person or group of people you trust.