

FORGIVENESS

Flow with the river, don't struggle against the current

The Hopi Indians talk about the great flowing river. Your job is not to continue holding on to the sides of life's flowing river, resisting the current or treading water in the eddy where you become weak and weathered, but to flow naturally with it downstream. Health and happiness are both states of being in flow and being on the path of least resistance. In this state life is not hard or laboured. Life and vitality spring up instead like bubbles in a hot spring or flow like a leaf down the river navigating the occasional rock.

Un-forgiveness - the stagnant pond

Un-forgiveness can even stop the flow of the river, creating its own stagnant and stinky whirlpool. Often you may feel a certain resistance to forgiving someone because you feel they deserve retribution or revenge, or you would "have to give in" and accept their behaviour and actions. This is not the essence of forgiveness. Instead, un-forgiveness is more a "punishment" to yourself – often leaving you treading water in certain patterns or ways of living or thrashing around in stinky water – keeping you, your body, your health, relationships and your life stagnant and stinky. Alternatively you could have thrown the person, who you feel has wronged you, overboard and they too may be struggling in the same stagnant pond and bearing the consequences.

Forgiveness flow

If someone has done something that has hurt or pained you, it is easy just to look at the incident or that person in the isolation or context of your own pain. Try on the other person's water skis rather than staying the wounded child by getting a more expansive appreciation of who the other person really is and the broader context of the situation that occurred. Realise the perpetrator may also be feeling sad, upset, hurt, and angry and is deserved of being heard and understood. They also may be feeling left in the deep water unable to get up on the water skis of life again.

Perhaps someone you have hurt, wronged or mistreated wants to forgive you but you deny them of completing the forgiveness process by not accepting their request to make amends. In essence this keeps two people treading water without a life jacket.

Forgiveness is not necessarily about condoning what has been done, but more an act of letting go of the attachment to feeling hurt, disappointed, or to whoever or whatever keeps you from experiencing life and health to its fullest. The act of letting go is not giving in, but more about negotiating the river of life in a different and more freeing way – the freedom coming from saying "I leave this behind" and "I choose other ways of responding to the situation and to the person" because it is actually costing me too much to stay in the un-forgiveness state and I wish to have more flow in my health, my energy levels and my experience of living.

In the centre of the word "forgiveness" is the word "give". Forgiveness therefore is an act of empowerment and also an act of giving – not only to the other person but to yourself. It says, "You are worth more than this."

Body un-forgiveness – lack of flow

When you are in the state of un-forgiveness, the river inside of you - your life energy or chi - is halted or barricaded. The state of un-forgiveness I believe manifests in health conditions that show lack of flow. eg constriction, oedema, clots, poor circulation, low mood, blockages, tumours. . When you forgive or allow yourself to be forgiven, momentum and movement can occur.

One of my clients who had had an abortion was still feeling guilty some 20 years later. Subconsciously she carried that guilt and un-forgiveness of self, and that manifested in her “block” to fertility and becoming pregnant.

A friend of mine developed cystitis. To me this is very much to do with “holding on to something” particularly in the area of sexuality and relationships and she felt unwilling to forgive her husband’s misdemeanours that had “inflamed” the relationship in the past. What does cystitis feel like? Painful, burning and excruciating – resembling the pain of betrayal and lack of trust.

I also have no doubt that carrying extra weight could be associated with holding on to grudges, hurts, pain and un-forgiveness and can keep you “wrapped up” and alone in your body space. I have evidenced people firstly releasing their “psychological” weight and then losing their excess weight more easily and sometimes effortlessly.

Un-forgiveness can literally “do your head in.” The constant barrage of thoughts that occur when someone remains in bitterness and un-forgiveness mode can keep the head constantly busy and overflowing. This could manifest in the form of a headache or migraine. How else might “overflow” manifest in your body and in your life?

Premature forgiveness

Is there such a thing as forgiving too early? Case in point may be a drunk driver killing one of your family members. I have seen grieving families almost immediately offer their forgiveness to the driver without fully having grieved, or in some cases hardly beginning the grieving process. I agree with Christiane Northrup (Women’s Bodies, Women’s Wisdom pp 526) who believes,

“If we forgive too early before experiencing and expressing the pain of what has occurred and the working through of that, this can keep something in silence. The emotional pain needs to be felt and released – otherwise it still festers and manifests itself in your body and can serve as a means of silencing the impact and the actual responsibility of the perpetrator.”

Acts of forgiveness – the life raft

Ritual is great for dealing with emotions and grief and for releasing un-forgiveness, and water is a powerful medium. Go to the sea and let go of whatever or whoever it is you are still holding on to. Stand under the shower and let the grudges and resentment and un-forgiveness symbolically wash over you. Do a detoxification and intentionally use that process to let go of emotional baggage. Take a bath and as you let go of the water, let go of resentment, excuses, blame and un-forgiveness. Use flower essences that assist you to let go and move on. Write a forgiveness note, poem or card – whether you send it or not. Write what you learned from the particular incident that pained you. Pick up the telephone. Send a person a symbol of peace. Forgive those who have “gone on to fresher water” by visiting the graveside and writing a list of special memories of that person. You will find your own way to climb aboard the life raft again and navigate the river of life more gracefully, rather than sink or “stink” in the stagnant pond of un-forgiveness.