

Healing Your Heart

Forgiving Yourself & Others

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In Egyptian mythology, there is a story that says that when a person dies, the soul travels to a different dimension to undergo a life review. In that timeless, space-less realm, the god Anubis places the recently deceased's astral heart on a scale to weigh it against the feather of truth. If the heart is lighter than the feather, then the soul is liberated for eternity. If the heart is heavier than the feather because it is filled with regrets, resentment, and remorse, then the soul is sent back for another lifetime of learning and evolution. (Chopra Centre)

In our age of increased spiritual awakening and desire for emotional healing and consciousness, this delightful story, like many myths, contains lessons as well as essential sacred truths from which we can learn. Despite the best will in the world, simply uncovering our wounds does not guarantee healing, because healing is a matter of the heart involving love, acceptance and surrender. Almost thirty years as a therapist and my own life experience, has taught me this fact. One can spend years in 'therapy' or counselling, have a cognitive understanding of the experiences that have traumatized and caused us to shut down, and still not heal or move on. We can tell and retell our story, and have it witnessed and acknowledged by our healer/therapist, time and again and still nothing happens. And nothing will, that is until you allow the miracle to take place in your heart-the miracle of love and forgiveness.

The ability to forgive is essential to spiritual as well as emotional wellbeing. But no miracle, no forgiveness, indeed no healing can happen from a closed heart. Shutting down is a natural reaction to

pain/trauma. We shut down as a means of protecting ourselves from further hurt. Nonetheless, our closed heart would never pass the test in the story above and be released into eternity, it is too heavy. It is filled with unshed tears and a myriad other emotions, sorrow, remorse, anger, bitterness, envy, resentment. I have lived and been a therapist long enough to know that healing is a process and the longer I live the more I respect the natural unfolding of life, consciousness and the soul. Franciscan Richard Rohr writes: *"Your heart has to be prepared ahead of time through faith and prayer and grace and mercy and love and forgiveness so you can keep your heart open in hell, when hell happens"*. Healing cannot be rushed or forced; our hearts need time to feel safe. Opening up will hurt, but it is a suffering that, if engaged with consciously, will lead us to healing. What is called for I believe, is a leap of faith, a leap into the unknown and a great deal of courage. Courage to be yourself, to be authentic enough to honor your pain, accept it, move through it and move on. Whether we have been bereaved of a loved one or suffer from a sense of abandonment or betrayal, or are filled with resentments, anger, bitterness or envy, we must be able to let go in order to be free. A heart burdened with these emotions for too long will grow tired and sick, eventually adversely affecting our physical health. We know this, but we still find it hard. That is, until we go through the process of conscious suffering and learning that our wounds are conduits to growth. As I wrote in my book ['Love in a Time of Broken Heart'](#), every betrayal or heartbreak is a call to consciousness. If only we could see adversity in this way, it might not lessen our pain but would undoubtedly hasten our journey towards healing and resolution.

Being able to forgive is essential to healing. Last year I gave a webinar entitled [The Compassionate Soul: Learning to Forgive Yourself & Others](#). At that time, I was particularly aware of a common block to healing and spiritual growth, that of being unable to forgive oneself. It appears we can forgive others more easily than we can ourselves, perhaps because of deep seated

lack of self acceptance or self love. Carl Jung refers to the difficulty of self forgiveness as an inability to accept ourselves completely, Shadow and all. Alan Watt says of Jung that he was the sort of man who could feel anxious, afraid and guilty without being ashamed of feeling this way. In other words, he (Jung) understood that an integrated person is not a person who has eliminated all these 'difficult' feelings and is wooden or all 'Persona'. Jung embraced his dark side and exhorted us to do the same if we want to be integrated, soulful human beings. Without this self acceptance, our attempts to help others are futile. As therapists, we know that the client/patient does not feel him/herself accepted unless the very worst in him/her is accepted too. So, when it comes to self forgiveness, how can we expect to heal what we shun? How can we heal our hearts if we are ashamed of what it holds? Forgiveness can have a 'religious' connotation, which many find difficult or paradoxical. Forgiveness and compassion are lauded as a path to God, but if you were taught that you are innately sinful how can you truly forgive yourself? Forgiveness, true forgiveness opens the heart and leads to compassion. But first comes the work of self acceptance and self love in all our imperfections. I do not believe that here in the West we have yet learnt to value our vulnerability sufficiently. Despite advances in understanding the emotional needs of a human being, we still feel somehow that it is 'not ok' to break down, spend time in the dark night of the soul, cry out for the support and love of others, or retreat from society long enough to heal oneself.

I learnt a lot about healing, love and forgiveness when I was studying in Mexico some years ago. I had gone there just a few weeks after losing a dear love and soul mate-I was bereaved in the deepest sense of the word and my heart (despite myself) was closed down. This was soon spotted by the Shamans and healers there who hauled me off to their healing sanctuary, performing several rituals, which left me exhausted but ultimately healed. *'Your heart is closed down, you are 'de luto'* (Spanish for in

mourning) they informed me. *'You need to cry, walk by the sea, let it out, express the grief in your heart and your soul will open again'*. After some time, and several healing sessions, I felt a huge heart opening which rooted in me feelings of love and compassion I have never lost. I forgave myself. I forgave my late partner with whom I had had a complicated and at times painful relationship. I opened up to the tearing pain of losing a man, a soulmate, a love that I felt to be part of myself. And when he died, part of me went with him. I have no doubt of that. In opening my broken heart during the healings, I found love again, I found the lost part of my soul and came away feeling more whole and complete.

Louise Hay writes that *'Forgiveness is for yourself because it frees you.'* Forgiving others is a different matter and yet totally dependent on an open heart. Here again, I discovered that forgiveness in no way requires that you trust the one you forgive, or indeed that you exonerate or excuse their behavior, or even wish to have a relationship with them again. You may confuse forgiveness with excusing or letting the other off the hook, but in essence, forgiveness is for you; being able to forgive sets you free. It brings you back to yourself so that you realize what you have learnt from the experience and how you have changed as a result. You may even find that in time you thank your 'aggressor' or 'wrong-doer' for the part he/she played in your soul growth. When we reach this point, we are well on the path towards compassion. Christine Neff, author of *Self Compassion* writes that *'self compassion honors the fact that all human beings are fallible, that wrong choices and feelings of regret are inevitable...'* Understanding this helps us to forgive others for what they did or did not do to us. And when we develop the courage to admit when we ourselves were wrong and work past our resistance to apologizing, we develop a deep sense of respect in ourselves and a humility which is an essential part of healing.

You may also wish to pray to your higher power for help in your process of self-forgiveness. Many of my clients have reported that

by doing this they believe they received help in this endeavor. I know that the Divine offers us openings all the time to help us grow and become more conscious. And that when we go through the open door, we are always met on the other side.

Tools to help us Forgive and Heal our Hearts

- Meditation and Mindfulness. Spend time going within and listening to your inner voice.
- Self-Examination and non-judgmental Awareness
- Express your feelings. (What you don't feel you can't heal)
- Give yourself Time and Unconditional Love
- Reach out to Others, we are all human with human weaknesses
- Pray. Praying to your higher self to forgive you and ask for comfort and love as well as help in your healing process
- Practice disengaging from your mind and your feelings, allow God/the Light/Oneness to speak to you. Become aware of being part of that Oneness.
- Practice allowing rather than 'doing' (ego doing)
- Be with your Higher Selves/dissolve lower frequency energies
- Claim Ownership, claim ownership of aligning to higher frequency/ to your soul
- Align with the Presence within you and merge with your soul