

LETTING GO

by Kirsty O'Callaghan

Over the years I have spoken to many people about this subject, and there are always two things that are asked and covered to fully understand this process. They are:

- What does letting go mean?
- How do I let go?

To have the explanation for these two areas will allow this very significant skill to be used effectively and what you would like to move towards and/or away from come more easily.

What does letting go mean?

Letting go, has almost become a buzz phrase of the new age. This is a shame considering when things become 'trendy' the true meaning and application may be lost.

In my experience letting go is being able to release those parts of the past or present situations which may be having a negative or energy draining effect on our efforts or self beliefs now. For example, we have had a disagreement with a friend, who may of said some hurtful things, then we think about this the majority of the time, our facial expressions show the strain, our posture is more rounded and we can either cut off from others around us, or we seek out as many friends and family as we can to tell us we are not what our friend said we were. During this time we have many things that can suffer; relationships with others, our partner, our work colleagues, our children, our pets etc. Other examples could include hurt or disappointment from our childhood, a past work situation, ourselves and our performance, an intimate relationship, and the list can go on.

The biggest clue is if you are having thoughts or memories that do not uplift you, and seemingly drain your energy and take your attention away from what is important to you and what you would like to be achieving, there is a situation and/or memory that you may be best to 'let go' of out of your experience and expectations of life in 'your world'.

When we carry all these memories of past failures, disappointments, hurts, fears, sadness and loss, the impact on our time, goal achievement, belief of what the world is, health and ability to engage with other people is huge. The dangerous thing can be that holding on to these memories for long enough can eventually create a belief in yourself that rings true for you and you become that belief, in your actions, re-actions and the way you conduct your day to day activities.

The key word here is memories. When we consider thoughts and memories, they are changeable. They are not made of stone or human flesh or even wood. They are just a hazy picture and feeling in your mind of a time when something didn't go right for you or someone didn't behave the way you wanted them to. As Louise Hay, the writer of the best selling book *You Can Heal Your Life*, says 'It is only a thought and a thought can be changed'. The important thing to remember is you are in charge of your thoughts, no body else can get into your head, you are the 'boss of your body', and you decide how you would like to experience tomorrow, and what new memories you want to create.

How do I let go?

In answering this question I often use the analogy of selling a car. Unless we have ownership of that car we cannot sell it or let it go. With this in mind, it is not until we own the memory and/or feeling, own our part in it and own how we have dealt with it, can we 'let go'.

When we own something, it gives us control over it and power to do what we want with it. With this power we can be in a place of awareness and understanding of the fact that no one can make us anything, it is the choices we make that make us who we are. This is a great realization.

To allow this to be clearer, we will use our previous example of the disagreement with a friend. After the disagreement, we walk away feeling hurt and offended, possibly amongst other emotions. It has started to affect our whole day and how we feel about ourselves. During this time we could take a moment, sit and feel the emotions this situation has brought up in us, replay the exact events and focus on what was our part in it, did we say something that was also hurtful, did we let down our friend in their eyes, or did we feel we did nothing to prompt this but still attracted it to us, or a number of other things could come to mind. Then, how did we re-act? Did we lash out, or did we not speak up for ourselves?

Once we have this clear, and have 'owned' our part in it, we can then take a step back and see what the 'lesson' to us was.

This means asking yourself, how did I attract this situation and how can I manage these type of situations better in the future? It could be that what your friend said was actually a reflection of what you think about yourself or you are being shown that you could communicate your needs better or there is a deeper past issue that keeps bringing these type of hurtful and disappointing events to you, or it could even be that you could make better choices of people that you choose to spend time with. Then the final step is to forgive your friend for not being the way you thought you wanted them to be, forgive yourself for your actions and promising yourself that you will, from now on, not only create new uplifting thoughts and experiences for you but really feel you are deserving of going forward and not living in the past governed by those memories.

This process holds the same for parenting, partnering, working, looking after yourself and your needs, not reaching targets set by and/or for you and even worrying about future outcomes.

If you find very deep issues that may have been traumatic or issues that you feel are too many or too hard to deal with on your own you can enlist the assistance of your chosen therapist with a professional capacity in the area of your needs. Not only is this a supportive environment to 'release' in, the therapist will be trained to hear what you are not saying, and see how other situations you find yourself may be related to current circumstances, and develop strategies with you to overcome these feelings and create new actions and experiences.

Coaching exercises for further consideration

- After reading the above information, think of something that you realize you may need to let go of, that is impacting on the way you function in your life now. Ask yourself; what was my part in this situation? Did I give permission to be treated like that, overtly or covertly? How did I re-act? What did I do after the event? What do I think was my 'lesson' from this? What can I see now that I could have done differently? It is always helpful to use a journal or notepad to write down your thoughts then re-read to gain perspective. You may like to do this exercise with any event you felt did not leave you uplifted, something you may be worrying about or an event you felt you did not do your best and find that it plays on your mind often.
- Ask yourself; Do I deserve good in my life, to meet goals set by me, to achieve and succeed, to have supportive and loving people around me, to feel totally energised and joy in my life? As you ask yourself this, jot down your thoughts and feelings. What comes up for you? Do you need to 'love' yourself first, so you can let go and be all you can and want to be? Will you be accepted in your 'world' without problems and disappointments to talk about? Are you able to let go and focus and communicate in the future and not in the past? If you find you are uncomfortable with how to do this, look at grouping similar situations that come up for you and how do they relate and how can you change your behaviours and re-actions and become pro-active in the solutions.
- When you are ready to let go, what are you going to fill this 'space' with? Some things we let go of can be there for a long time, including chosen behaviours, so to leaving this empty can almost certainly allow the old issue that was not working for you to creep back in. Have some plans in place to replace the old, for example a new behaviour plan, a new way of making friends, a new timetable, a new venture or experience you would like to do or even a new way to present yourself

to the world by getting a new outfit or hair cut. This is a starting point to creating a new you.

I believe we all make mistakes, we all attract discomfort at times and we all experience 'the victim' at some point in our life. What we can control is our re-action to it and what was to be learnt and where that can take us.

In closing a quote for your consideration:

"If growing up is the process of creating ideas and dreams about what life should be, then maturity is letting go again".

Mary Beth Danielson.



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