

Letting go to be free

Letting go when you've experienced pain from a person or event is not condoning what happened. Letting go doesn't mean you won't address the hurt; it means you will address it from a healthier place. This is not about the other person/event, it is about freeing yourself from reliving it, to stop dragging it with you. Letting go helps your healing.

Feel all your feelings, all the way through. Invite a counselor, coach, or friend to witness your experience. Or journal as your feelings flow, then burn the words to release them. The person who witnesses your emotions will hold space for them, not try to console you or fix the problem. They will ask if there is more without adding to your feelings. There are often multiple feelings involved when we have experienced injury or harm. These emotions are the pain you experienced with the person or event. Your feelings may feel like small or large waves. Each wave will be short, about 90 seconds, and they simply are what they are. You don't need to know why you feel them, that is your mind trying to drive the body. Allow your body to share what it shares.

When emotions revisit allow the feelings to flow through you. Feel the emotions, don't become them. Thoughts arise as involuntarily as your digestive system. You are not your thoughts; they are simply visitors inviting reflection. Invite them to move through you, then allow them to drift slowly down to the floor as a leaf might fall from a tree. This invites you to release the pain and let go of the suffering your thoughts add to the experience. As you allow the feelings to move through you make space for reframing your thoughts around the experience. You can imagine revenge, just don't act on or ruminate on those thoughts.

If your thoughts overtake you, build an imaginary wall around the drain that represents the funnels where your thoughts take you. When a thought invites you to the drain, smile, breath, and build a wall, "we are going over here, flowing with ease in this direction." For those of us who catastrophize - practice best-case, worst-case, and most-likely scenarios. Flow to the most-likely or best-case scenarios, invite the thoughts to swirl there. Practice breathing in for a count of four and then exhaling for a count of six. This is one way to invite your body to remove the harm from your body as you reframe your thoughts.

Their misdeed invited your resentment. Select a small object you can easily drop to the floor. Name the thought this represents. "*He/she/they shouldn't have...*" Hold the object, grip it tightly. Notice your body's reaction as you hold it tightly, become aware "I choose to hold this thought tightly."

Loosen your grip, open your hand. This object is the thought inviting your suffering. Notice how you feel when you choose to momentarily let go of the thought. Each time you open your hand hold that openness for longer. Take deep breaths within that relief from suffering.

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You can attach a different thought to the event. As long as you have allowed your feelings to move through you are free to attach new thoughts without adding to your body's pain. Is there a gift that came from the painful event? A moment of clarity? A call for change? A deeper awareness of your worth that you are willing to stand for? Your thoughts are not you, just as the small object in your hand is not you. Open and close your hand with each thought, noticing your body's reactions.

Consider humanizing the other person or event. We often reduce the other person or event to one facet of who they are. Those of us who hurt others tend to come from a history of hurt. This is not to condone their behavior, and you can still hold them accountable. This is to reduce or remove your suffering by letting them go from your thoughts that turn that pain into suffering. Can you build a story that sees their fear, pain, and suffering? Can you build a story that connects you to a shared value even though their strategy is quite different from yours? Having a more complex view of the person or event helps you support changes that can bring those who hurt others into their own healing journey, to reduce future hurt.

When you drop the small object and its negative thoughts you empower and release yourself from suffering.

When you rename the small object with an empowered thought you release yourself from suffering.

Practice the release. Take deep breaths and explore your relationship with the object and the various thoughts to which you attach it.

Ask yourself the following questions, pausing after each question to allow embodied answers.

1. Who am I, how do I feel, with this suffering?
2. Do I want to let the suffering go? What do I get to have or avoid if I keep it?
3. Who am I, how do I feel, when I release or reframe my suffering?
4. Am I willing to let the suffering go? What do I get to have if I release it?

This is an embodied experience as well as a reframing of your thoughts. Do each slowly and repeat the process until you feel the release.