



When we talk about creating a joyful life, we have to talk about forgiveness. After all, it is where you begin. In order to create joy, you have to let go of the past.

I have two favorite sayings about it...let me share them with you.

“Forgiveness is a courageous act. It is an active, not a passive process. It is ultimately about releasing the power another has over you and grabbing on to your own power”

And...

“Sometimes you have keep forgiving until it takes”

Back in the midst of my divorce, there was A LOT of forgiving to do! At the time, I processed my thoughts about it in my blog. This first one is at the beginning of the process and oh my, I was angry. I was hurt; I was a lot of things. If Forgiveness was the sun, I was sitting somewhere on the other side of Pluto. I knew it and I defiantly declared that I didn't really care.

I was mad.

So, here it is: the day I realized that I needed to forgive and found myself unable to gather up the courage to go there.

Forgiveness

It happened this afternoon.

A person that I've been angry at...and have resented for a long long time crossed my path. She knows I'm angry, she knows why...because I'm sorry to confess, I've been talking shit about her. Not something I'm proud of. But there it is.

As she crossed my path, there was an icy energy between us. As she left, I explained to my friends who were with me who she was and why I was angry. And of course, being my friends, they totally understood my position and sympathized.

I knew it was inevitable. Although the original reason that we parted as long since passed, recently it has come back to haunt me. So there it was and I jumped on it, feeling the anger again and ignoring the pain of course. I started thinking of her, talking about her. It was only a matter of time before inevitably, she would show up.

Where previously we had exchanged pleasantries, this time there was none of that. This time there was just a stony silence.

She keeps popping up in my life and in the most unpleasant of ways. There is no escaping her existence short of moving far far away. And I refuse to do that. I won't give up my life here just to not be around her.

And there's a part of me that thought for a moment, "Well, she deserves what she gets". Not very loving I know.

A lot of people know about the two of us...and a lot of people think that I'm completely justified in my anger. A lot of people have helped me plot revenge and have joined me in gossiping about this woman. It seems others have grudges to hold against her as well...which only perpetuates my justification in being angry.

But...as the moment passed and she went away, I realized that I really didn't enjoy the feeling I had, that in fact, I can't justify my behavior...because it is just as wrong as what she has done. And I know that if I don't enjoy a feeling, escaping that feeling is just a choice away.

So, I started thinking, "I need to forgive this person".

At one point, I thought I had. I woke up one day and I just wasn't angry with her anymore. Since that time, however, I've had the opportunity to build the anger back up again.

The truth is, I don't want to forgive her. And it's not about not being able to look at my role in the whole thing. I'm an expert at looking at myself and my behavior. I'm extremely clear on the part I played in this whole sorry mess. I just don't want to forgive her. And that is a problem, I think.

So, then I asked myself..."what would my life be like if I forgave her?" At this very moment, I find it hard to picture. I've held my anger and my victimhood so dear for so long, I can't imagine a life without it...I can't imagine a day, or even a moment without it.

So...what to do? Continue to abuse myself with this anger and hatred or let it go?

I know what I should do...but what I want to do is completely different.

And so it's time to open the question up to the Universe for an answer. And someday soon it will come to me.

I wonder...what would my life be like if I just let it go?

Right now, I have no idea.

1. Is there someone in your life who you know you *should* forgive but you can't seem to do it? If so, it's not time to forgive, it's time to heal.

- Write it down.
- Accept it - let go of judgement, you don't *have* to forgive them
- You don't *have* to do anything and thinking so keeps you stuck, it just punishes you.

2 Shift your thought to *I need to forgive and I'm not ready to*

- Just because you can't forgive now, doesn't mean you never will
- It doesn't mean you will either
- It just means that in this moment you are going to honor your pain, hurt and anger. You are putting your own well-being ahead of anyone else.
- You will forgive when you choose to, when you are past the pain, when and only when *í* and *ifí* you are ready.
- There is no time limit here. Take as long as you need.

3. Write down the person's name

Write down why you shouldn't forgive,
Get it all out on paper,
Explain why you don't need to forgive

This completes the exercise. Accept that you are justified in your anger and that you may not choose to forgive this person at this time, or ever. Know that it is entirely up to you. For now, just get the feelings out and let them be for a while.

Let them be has two meanings

1. *Leave them alone*, don't try to fix it or make it go away, remember that you can feel your feelings and not do anything about it.
2. *Allow them to exist* *ó* now that you know that you are justified, don't try to **MAKE** yourself forgive *í* just let the feelings be there.

Letting your feelings be doesn't mean that you have to sit or wallow in them. You can set a timer and allow the feelings to be there for 15 minutes and then get up and go on with your day. When the feelings come back into your brain, you can choose to allow them again for a few minutes, or you can ask them to sit in the background until you're ready, but set the intention to come back to the feelings. Set aside a time to sit with your journal, allow the feelings to come back again and write it out in your journal. If you are afraid of being overcome with the emotion, remember to set your timer or check in with a trusted friend who will listen and is willing to check in with you at regular intervals for a little while (you decide how long you need).

That's it.

It feels counter-intuitive, I know.

We're taught to deal with our feelings or squash them down but our feelings are simply letting us know there was an injury. By allowing them to exist and see the light of day, you are giving yourself permission to feel what you feel and you are proving to yourself that you won't die from a negative feeling.

Most importantly, there is an alchemy in allowing your feelings the chance to see the light of day. By taking away the stigma of shame, blame or guilt, you become un-stuck.