

Practicum in MindBody Healing

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Letter-Writing Exercise

(adapted from John Gray workshop:

Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus)

The purpose of this exercise is help you get in touch with your feelings and emotions, to feel them, and to identify more clearly the underlying issues that triggered your reaction. It has been said that "feelings buried alive never die". By communicating feelings, clarifying your needs, and knowing what is important to your heart, you create greater opportunities for releasing and healing core issues. Knowing and experiencing what is essential to your emotional well-being often creates a shift that opens doors to greater possibilities for personal relationships and fulfillment.

Letter #1 Communicating your feelings.....

Although you will not actually be sending it, begin this as you would any letter.... and **describe some event, communication, situation, etc., that was upsetting to you.**

For example.....

Dear _____ ,

I'm writing this letter to express some feelings that I need to get off my chest

I'm remembering the time that you

(describe briefly what happened in a somewhat objective way.

Avoid being overly victimized in your portrayal of the event(s).

The most upsetting thing about it was

(express your thoughts, judgments, attitudes, and opinions about the offense. What about the person's behavior (or the event) was upsetting?

Next say how you felt at the time (or how you feel now) about what happened.

When (...those things happened) I felt very

.(hurt, disturbed, frightened, angry, sad, abandoned, betrayed, neglected, resentful, jealous, lonely, rejected, etc.....)

Next communicate what it was that you needed from them at the time

Say what you would have appreciated from them.

What I really needed from you at the time was ...

(ie, for you to really listen to me, ... for you to stand by me, ...for you to express your appreciation, for you to share your feelings; ... for you to show your love for me; BE AS SPECIFIC AS POSSIBLE WITH YOUR DESCRIPTION OF YOUR UNFULFILLED NEED)

Bring your letter to completion, with a sense of having communicated everything you need to say, including things you've withheld up until now.

Letter #2 Their letter to you (from their heart to yours)

In this letter say exactly what you would love to hear in response. (not what they would most likely have said, based on the past) Say in this letter to yourself everything that your heart and soul would like to hear. Give it to yourself as you become aware of what it is. If the other person were only aware and capable of such sensitivity, this is what they would say to you now. This is your opportunity to give to yourself, to understand what your needs are, to fine-tune your own sensitivities to yourself. Design this letter as the blue-print for healthy, satisfying communication.

For example:

Dear _____ ,

I read your letter and I was deeply moved. I see now what a mistake I made. I'm really sorry about what happened. It was wrong for me to behave that way. You deserve to be heard, and I realize that I shut you out. There are so many things I need to say to you. I can appreciate now your good intentions, and the many ways you've been here for me. Our relationship is very important to me, and I am learning so much about the beautiful person you are from this whole experience. In the future I will be more conscious of your needs. You deserve to be treated with dignity and respect, and I'm happy to talk with you more about what happened if it might help us work this out.

Next say what you need to hear in the way of possibilities for solutions, corrections, reconciliation, etc. If there's something specific you'd like to receive from them, go ahead and imagine receiving it. What do you really want from this person? Express this through them, have them offer you something you would like to hear.

Remember, this is a gift to yourself ... getting in touch with your needs, clarifying them. Allow yourself to feel what its like to be treated with respect and dignity. Don't hold back or be too realistic. This is really a way to communicate your needs and desires, not what you expect from them.

Letter #3 The last word, /completion

This is your chance to see how complete you have been in your communication. This is you letter back to them. The only direction here is to be genuine in your responses. What would you say after feeling the emotions and thoughts expressed so far. Do you feel like letting go? Firming up your boundaries? Forgiving? Opening to new possibilities? Write your natural response in this letter.

It is a good idea to wait until things are on track again before sharing these letter with the person, if ever. It is usually not important that you do. For those who are open to reading and sharing these letters, a great deal of compassion for each others feelings develops. We are really all alike at the core.