

Completing Unfinished Emotional Business

Introduction

In Section I of the Living Journal, you began a process of looking at the reality of your life up to this present moment in time. You have reflected on “where you are” and “where you’ve been” and acknowledged various thoughts and feelings contained in these contexts and times. In the exercises so far, you have considered perhaps only one or two contexts or periods of your life on which to expand. It will be valuable for you to revisit these exercises from time to time and expand on other contexts and periods that you feel are significant to you in some way. Your whole purpose in doing this is to “bring up” unfinished emotional business so that you can finally lay them to rest. And laying an emotion to rest is learning to let it go. The exercises that follow are tools to help you work through and release these unfinished emotions.

You have also started on the MOMENT LOG, which is an ongoing account of where things are, in this present moment, as your life moves into the future. You may notice that, the more you are honest with yourself about the facts of your awareness, you feel a little freer inside. There is truth to the saying that the truth will set you free. The MOMENT LOG is simply that; it is telling the truth about what is going on inside, positive or negative, painful or pleasant. When we can fully acknowledge the truth of our thoughts and feelings, we can learn to let them go. *Until* we acknowledge the truth we are stuck with the experience. The only thing that makes an emotion negative is our avoidance of it, our denial of it, our pretending that it doesn’t exist. But we can’t let anything go that we first don’t clearly identify and accept what it is.

There are a few basic steps to working through any emotion, feeling or inner experience. The first is to *identify* the experience. The MOMENT LOG is the basic tool to help you recognize and open up to your inner world. You are learning to *observe*, without judgment the phenomenon of your feelings, thoughts, images memories, fantasies and body sensations as they occur *right now*. Part of the “problem” that you’ve experienced up to this point in time is that you have lived *in* your thoughts, *in* your feelings and *in* your memories. You are learning to “step outside” and see your inner world for what it is. As mentioned previously, many so-called “problems” will clear up spontaneously simply by observing them for what they are—thoughts and feelings!

The next step to working through any “unfinished experience” is to recognize your responsibility for it. Taking responsibility for your inner world is simply saying, “These are *my* thoughts and feelings”. *I* am thinking these thoughts, *I* am feeling these feelings and *I* am remembering my memories. “Owning” your thoughts and feelings places you in charge of them and helps you recognize that you are the chooser. And being the chooser of your thoughts and feelings means that you can keep them or let them go.

Knowing that you are responsible for your thoughts and feelings opens up a whole new possibility in life. You discover that certain thoughts and feelings are the source of your unhappiness. If you feel guilty and tell yourself what a horrible person you are, you are not a happy person. If you live *in* guilt and *in* the thought "I am a horrible person", it will be all you know. You will be like the fish in water not realizing that there is another possibility. But when you can "step outside" of the feeling, observe it, own it and realize that you are *choosing* the feeling, then you can decide whether this is what you want to keep.

Taking responsibility for your inner world is also a key for open, honest communication. True communication is simple. It is making another person aware of what is going on in your inner world. When you live *in* your thoughts and feelings you cannot share them because you cannot observe them. All you can do is *be* them. And when you *are* your thoughts and feelings, all you can do is manipulate and try to control others to make you feel better or different. Instead of a relationship based on sharing and open communication, your relationships turn into blame and control.

The MOMENT LOG is the window that leads into other parts of the journal. As you write out your present experience you will notice how certain emotions are connected to certain people, contexts and periods of your life. If you are struggling with a particular experience you might turn it into a fantasy dialogue with another person, communicate with a part of yourself that you have disowned, go back to an earlier time and say what was never said, learn to let the feeling go or forgive what you cannot change. These are all possible approaches, depending on the nature of the experience, for which you can use the Living Journal. The exercises that follow will give you an experience of working through a situation using these various approaches.