The Power of Forgiveness

There is no more effective way for your clients to heal their past and support their relationships to thrive than by forgiving. It is critical that they begin this healing process by forgiving themselves. Teach them that all human beings make mistakes and the tragedy is not in making the mistake but in not having learned from it. And it’s never too late to do so.

Part of the challenge is how most people relate to mistakes and problems. In our culture, we have determined that challenges of any nature are bad and that we shouldn’t make mistakes. With this limiting paradigm, we have very little room to risk, take chances and aggressively pursue our dreams and honor our values. The concern of avoiding mistakes at all cost has us needlessly resign ourselves to a life that is less than ideal.

If your clients can’t afford to make a mistake, they won’t have the freedom to grow, expand out of their comfort zone and achieve greatness. Challenge them instead to consider adopting the perspective that everyone who lives makes mistakes and that the greatest mistake they can make is to have mistakes crush their spirit and steal their fervor for accessing the best that life has to offer. If they view mistakes as an essential component of their evolution, they will see that they actually support them to see things differently. As your clients continue to learn from their mistakes, their awareness will increase and they will be less likely to repeat these same mistakes.

Teach your clients that powerful people focus not on avoiding mistakes but on living their commitments instead. Invite them to embrace mistakes, learn from each one and look forward to the insights and gifts that are sure to come from experiencing future mistakes. By shifting their relationship to mistakes and overcoming their fear of making them, they can move on with our lives in a powerful manner. They can expect to make more mistakes, encounter many more challenges and grow from each enriching experience. So, invite them to acknowledge themselves for having learned some extremely valuable lessons from their mistakes.

Assume that your clients all do the best they can to not only survive but to actually thrive as they go about our daily lives. They instinctively seek pleasure and avoid pain. Based upon the limited perspective they have as imperfect creatures, they will err from time to time. So have compassion for their human weaknesses and invite them to adopt this same attitude toward others. Share your perspective that everything is important and nothing matters so much that they should choose the alternative to risking intelligently. Avoiding growth and risk would mean the death of their spirit and result in the resignation that comes with living in fear and playing not to lose instead of to win.

Know that your clients are often their own harshest critics. When they judge themselves to be bad and unworthy of love and life’s greatest pleasures, they will manifest a negative, destructive energy that ensures this be so. Their self-esteem will suffer to the extent they maintain their right to punish themselves for past weaknesses and mistakes. They will tend to attract the negative energy they put out into the world. By failing to forgive themselves, they will block the loving energy that cleanses their souls and allows them to share their greatest gift with others, the gift of being the best they can be.
By stubbornly keeping their critical self-judgments and the self-anger that accompanies these in place, your clients will avoid responsibility for making their relationships stronger and their lives work most advantageously. Doing so allows them to shirk liability for their communication. They stay angry with themselves and keep active an unhealthy level of self-pity for their faults. This distracts them from getting on with their lives and cleaning up their mess! It’s a lot more difficult to forgive and give up being a victim. Forgiving enables them to proactively get about the business of making their lives and relationships flourish rather than keep the downward spiral of self-incrimination and blaming others alive. Making mistakes is part of the human condition. Stress that it has nothing to do with the worthiness of your client as a person. It also has no bearing on the healthy unconditional self-acceptance essential to high self-esteem. Taking responsibility for their excellence means having your clients commit to no longer acting in a manner consistent with their past mistakes, but to learn from them instead.

You’ll find that your clients hate those things about others that they hate most about themselves. Forgiving themselves is the first step in clearing the way to forgive others. By forgiving themselves, the toxic resentment that consumes their spirit and destroys self-esteem will give way to the self-love that precedes forgiving and loving others.

Waiting for others to initiate reconciliation will not support your clients’ relationships, health or self-image. Healing their troubled past will come from the empathy they get by putting themselves in the other person’s world and understanding why that person may have acted as he did. By being the first to forgive others, teach your clients that they can pave a new road to a future based upon love rather than anger. Remind them that anger results from their interpretations about what was done, not the actions themselves. Forgiving will make them the champion and designer of their future selves...in a way they can feel good about who they are.

Likewise, there may be some people who your clients have wronged. Look with them to see if there is anything they can do to make amends for hurting others with their past behavior. Invite them to clean up misspoken words and acknowledge mistakes. Have them acknowledge the casual promises that they blew off as being unimportant. Suggest that they offer a sincere apology if they have erred and commit to make things right and repair the damaged relationship, if possible. Their reparation should be appropriate for the damage they caused and directed at the person harmed. When your clients actively accept responsibility for their part in failed communication or a wounded relationship, they will act with the courage to make things right. This commitment blazes a trail to a new way of being.

When your clients apologize for past mistakes and take appropriate action to clean up the mess created, they take responsibility for their part by giving a 100 percent effort toward healing the relationship. However the other person chooses to respond, suggest that they take comfort in knowing they have done whatever they could to repair the harm. It will support your clients to be committed to healing the relationship without an attachment to having the other person respond in kind. By showing a willingness to repair the situation to the best of their ability, they will have done their part to initiate a healing of the relationship. Invite them to keep the door open to communication, congratulate themselves for courageously taking action in the direction of completion and get on with their lives. When they have done everything they can to right a past indiscretion, it will not support them to continue to berate themselves about what was done. We all make mistakes. All we can ask of ourselves is to
continue to learn from our actions, commit to honoring others and take responsibility for being the person we declare ourselves to be. Again, this does not excuse hurtful or wrongful action. It simply means acting from love upon realizing one has caused another pain or loss.

With this foundation of love, your clients are now free to declare who they are to the world rather than have resentment dictate their reactions. Their attachment to making themselves and others wrong will fade and a commitment to deliberately designing the person they have decided to be will be possible. Miracles will manifest and their self-image and personal power will soar.

Let’s now look at some exercises your clients can do to practice forgiveness…

Invite your clients to list all the items for which they have not yet forgiven themselves and others. Support them to create a plan to clean up any misspoken words, acknowledge mistakes and apologize for any errors they may have made. For those deceased or those they cannot or choose not to achieve completion with in person, suggest that they write a letter expressing their thoughts, emotions and forgiveness. Mailing the letter is optional.