

Personal Healing: The “Bad” News and the “Good” News

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Life is not a Hallmark card, or a “feel good” movie. Life is complex, challenging, and more complicated than heroes and villains. Part of life involves sadness, disappointments, losses, betrayals, and wounds.

First the bad news: Wounds. We all have them. We are both the victims of wounds and the perpetrator of wounds. Some people wound others intentionally, and others are totally unaware of the results of their hurtful words or actions. Some wounds are superficial, and other wounds are deep. Some people were wounded as children, because they never received the love, affection, and attention they needed from parents and family. Shame is an example of a wound. Others were wounded by peers who mistreated them. There are physical wounds, emotional wounds, wounds of neglect, wounds of inappropriate sexual interaction. There are betrayal wounds and broken promise wounds.

Not only are we wounded by people in our lives, but we also experience woundedness because of our beliefs and attitudes. We are wounded due to our own expectations of how things “should” be. This is called “shouldistic” thinking. **David Richo, in his book, “*The Five Things We Cannot Change and the Happiness We Find by Embracing Them,*” tells us that certain “givens” are the facts of life.**

They are:

- Things don’t go according to plan.
- Things change and end and all people leave us in one way or another.
- Life is not fair.
- Pain is a part of life.
- People are not always loyal and honest.

It may be difficult for us to accept these, Richo says, because we want to control everything that happens to us. According to Richo, some people believe suffering happens only to those who deserve it. When bad things happen to “good people like us,” we are sometimes shocked and outraged. But the reality is that we will all suffer in some ways.

So what is the good news? *The good news is that we can be “healed” if we change our beliefs, and start understanding that life is not about having things go our way, but rather about lessons that we can learn from everything that happens to us.* Acceptance of life as it is, instead of how we wish it were, is the first step to healing. This coming to terms with life will save us many years of struggling, much bitterness and resentment. We can begin to understand that our suffering also unites us with all other living things. We can develop deeper compassion and empathy when we suffer.

From the time we are born, we are indoctrinated with certain ideas about ourselves, life, and other people. We make many of our choices based on what we understand about a situation. Sometimes, we are lacking important information or are simply wrong, and our choices get us into trouble. We may misread what a situation requires. Sometimes, through no fault of our own, things come crashing down around us. We may be at fault, or we may simply be bystanders who are at a certain place in a certain time.

In order to heal ourselves, it is helpful to realize that it is possible that what we call “mistakes” were simply opportunities to learn something important. People may come into our lives because there is some important message we must learn from them.

Byron Katie, in her book, *“Loving What Is,”* discusses The Work one can do to realize that we do not always “understand” what is happening around us. **We often ascribe motives to people that are simply not true.** We make assumptions that are incorrect. If you love “what is,” does that mean you do nothing about the injustices that are done to people? We can still work toward changing the world, and creating more love between people. But first, it is helpful to believe that the Universe is on our side, even though we have been hurt and have suffered.

There are lots of healers in the world around us. Many of these healers can offer us new perspectives about ourselves and life. We can be healed physically, emotionally and spiritually. Some healers may do body work. Doctors, nurses, physical therapists and massage therapists are all healers. Other healers can help with coaching. Some are therapists and help us work through our emotional pain, let go of the past, and forgive. Still others may be spiritual directors.

Some people can heal themselves, and other people need an outside support person to help them heal. People can be healed individually and in groups. The opportunities for healing abound. First, we must think about our wounds, and what we wish to do about them. We can agonize over what was done to us, or we can accept what has happened and move on from it. **Forgiveness of individuals can help, but the BIG forgiveness is accepting the “givens” of life. Gratitude for all we have been given (the “good” and the “bad”) is the key to healing.**