



How to Let Go of the Past

By Julie Fuimano-Donley, Personal Development Author & Coach

What does it mean to forgive? This topic often comes up in conversations with clients who are holding on to so much pain from their past. When you hold tightly to something, much like having two clenched fists, you are not open to receive new gifts from the universe. It also requires a lot of energy to keep those fists closed tight. What does one need to do to let go of past hurts?

Every day you experience feelings over things that occur. When difficult and challenging events happen, do you address your emotional state or perhaps like millions of other people, you have no idea how to handle your feelings when they come up? When you don't deal with your feelings completely, the pain remains in your cell's memory until you are willing to face it.

Learning to acknowledge feelings that come up for you and then speaking up for yourself helps you to deal with things in the moment they occur so you don't drag things from one moment into the next.

In order to lighten your burden in the present, you must deal with and let go of the emotional energy (the baggage) you carry from yesterday and yester-year. You need to come to terms with your past and leave the past behind you where it belongs.

Acknowledging Your Emotions

When you experience some feeling, it's like having someone tap you on the shoulder; it's a message bringing your attention to something. When you acknowledge the feeling by recognizing its presence and experiencing it in your body, the energy around it dissipates; you can think clearly again. You cannot think and feel at the same time so if you experience a feeling regarding some situation but do nothing, the story you create related to the event will be grounded in your emotional state. Immersed in your emotional energy, you create a kind of cocoon that does not allow for reasoning; there are different areas of the brain at work when you are emotional versus when you are rational. Within your cocoon, you are in judgment and closed to hearing anything other than your own thoughts on the matter, thoughts which are circulating in your mind trying to make sense of the emotion you experienced rather than the event itself.

Feelings and the situation need to be managed differently. In the case of past events, which this article is addressing, the event itself has already occurred; it's over. It was what it was. While you cannot change what has transpired, you can change how you *think about* what happened. Your emotional state at that time needs to be revisited. Unless you deal with the emotions associated with that event, you will continue to carry them with you into today. Go back in your history, decade by decade, what events, people, or things still evoke in you some emotion? If you are still angry about what your mom did to you when you were 10, then there is still work to do; you have not acknowledged how your 10-year-old self was hurting and you need to do so in order to move beyond it.

The Benefits of Holding On

What are the benefits of holding onto your pain? I know what you're going to say: there are no benefits! But the fact is that there has to be something you gain by holding onto your hurt or else you would let go.

Perhaps what you gain is the thrill of the story. By having the story to tell, you can create some excitement and get acknowledged by others. You create a stir and in doing so, you pacify your ego's need for attention and the emotional energy associated with the event is refreshed.

Perhaps the story allows you to wallow in your self-pity, feel sorry for yourself, or put yourself down. Many people are accustomed to making themselves feel bad and do so at any opportunity.

Perhaps you've been telling the tale for so long it's become habit. You have made the story shape you into who you are. So long as you continue to tell the tale, you feel comfortable. Without the story, you might feel lost. The story is all you know. A client recently remarked: "unhappiness has become habit. It's all I have known for so



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long that it's comfortable for me. I need to learn what it feels like to be happy so that I can reach for that instead and let go of all this pain." How interesting that unhappiness should become habit.



Whatever the potential gain, you must be willing to let go of this for something better. Although you may be gaining something, it's costing you greatly. Whenever you hold onto something from your past, think of it as a chain wrapped around your ankle. And as you move forward on your life's journey—the journey of a thousand miles—you drag all of the emotional chains from your past. As soon as you let go, imagine how much lighter you are. Imagine how much faster you move and how much more agile you are. Those chains keep you stuck; they keep you from achieving something greater. And until you cut that chain, you cannot move forward; you cannot fly.

It can take time for you to become comfortable living without the chain. For many years, that chain has become a kind of safety blanket and you feel naked without it. But eventually, you get more and more comfortable. And if you practice letting go, you learn to turn things over more quickly, holding onto nothing from today so you move into tomorrow with no new chains to burden you or hold you back from your flight.

Acceptance

"Forgiveness is the acceptance that there's no hope for a better past." - Judi Talesnik

In order to let go, you have to accept things as they are without the judgment of good/bad, right/wrong, like/dislike; it simply was what it was, like it or not. Letting go of the emotional attachment to the event allows you to tell the story without any emotional energy lingering. In other words, it becomes just a story from one mile of the journey of your life—nothing more. Perhaps that event shaped you in some way; but the energy you experienced at the time of the event no longer has a grip on how you behave in the present.

Forgiveness is really about learning to love and loving is about accepting without condition. You learn that people are fallible—especially our parents. You learn that people do the best they can at any given moment, even if you know they can do better. Perhaps they don't know how. Most people operate with good intentions. You learn to love them in spite of their humanity and spend time with people who make you feel good. Most important, you learn to forgive your own humanity as you navigate this thing we call life. And as you learn to accept and forgive your own humanness, you are more accepting and forgiving of others.

Are you ready for a change and realize that the biggest thing standing in your way to success is you? Are you tired of people-pleasing, living in chaos, or being overwhelmed or unhappy and ready to take a stand in your own life to make it great? Then coaching with Julie is the answer. Julie Fuimano-Donley is a Masterful Coach and Motivational Speaker dedicated to helping people find meaning and achieve a new level of success in life, career, and relationships. Visit her website www.NurturingYourSuccess.com for more information and to sign up for her empowering e-newsletter. Contact Julie at (610) 277-2726 or write to Julie@NurturingYourSuccess.com to arrange a coaching consultation. Julie is an accomplished writer and author of the life manual and confidence builder, [The Journey Called YOU: A Roadmap to Self-Discovery and Acceptance](#)—available wherever books are sold. As an inspirational speaker, her presentation topics include mastering change, emotional intelligence, and advanced communication skills.



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