

September 2010

Letting Go of Our Past

When we embark on a new relationship with someone, we should base our perceptions on new information. In a perfect world we let go of old relationships or stereotypes. However, letting go of past beliefs or old relationships is more difficult than it sounds whilst still learning lessons from them.

Sigmund Freud's theory of transference in psychotherapy occurs when someone who is being counselled starts to feel strong attachments to his or her therapist. It's the redirection of feelings – possibly from childhood – to the therapist. Carl Jung said that 'it is the alpha and omega of the analytic method.' Transference in psychotherapy, and everyday life, is common; some therapists, of which I am one, believe it's an intense process.

Both men and women with a history of child abuse are commonly known to transfer their feelings about the abusive parent to new adults in their life. When they form new relationships, they subconsciously can't let go of stereotypes when the new person resembles the abusive parent in some way.

Another form of transference in everyday life occurs when people gossip. We call this "spontaneous trait transference." Transference occurs when someone says something positive or negative about a third party. The listener often attributes those same traits to the speaker. "In other words, politicians who allege corruption by their opponents may themselves be perceived as dishonest, critics who praise artists may themselves be perceived as talented, and gossips who describe others' infidelities may themselves be viewed as immoral,"

We can learn to let go of our past but, beforehand we need to deeply and with absolute honesty consciously bring back our memories and experiences. This can be quite a harrowing experience and it is the responsibility of the counsellor to hold, or support and 'keep the client safe' through this process.

Whilst in this process we need to accept that there's nothing we can do to change the past. We did the best we knew how at that time.

When we are facing our failures, we need to know that we were as good, loving, and effective as we could have been at that time. If we were to go back, we couldn't do anything differently because that's who we were and that's what we knew then. Let it go.

Forgive ourselves for previous mistakes. Ruminating on what we could have or should have done is ineffective and unhealthy. When we start dealing with our mistakes or facing our failures, we must learn to forgive ourselves and examine how we feel in the present, enjoy that and remain with that, not imagining the next moment or the last but right now.

Time is the world's best healer and we all have this medicine within us. We will all heal and move on. Once we let go of the past our wounds will quickly heal without so much as a scar!

We don't necessarily have to make a whole new set of friends; we can initiate a new type of friendship with a colleague or invite a neighbour over for coffee. If we talk about facing our failures, we will be better able to actually face our failures.

Letting Go of Our Past

Through effective therapy we learn that it is perfectly fine and safe to vent and share our pain and sadness, and it helps us to genuinely empathise and show interest in other people's lives. When we let go of our past we are also letting go of ourselves which is wonderfully liberating but also frightening because we learn a certain safety in the controls we have built up. We need to break these to then live by our spirit rather than our mind.



"Sustainable Empowerment" is a new approach to psychotherapy and counselling developed by Richard Gosling that can help in building a stronger and more loving You.

Richard specialises in "Trauma Therapy" and "Crisis Counselling", is a member of the UK Association of Humanistic Psychology Practitioners and is offering his help and services in West London.

For more information on "Sustainable Empowerment" please visit www.sustainable-empowerment.co.uk or get in touch with Richard via the following email address: richard@sustainable-empowerment.co.uk