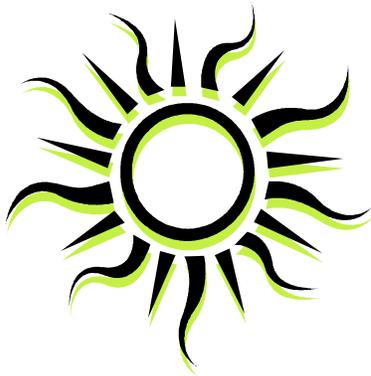


INVITATION TO AWARENESS



Healing is a complex process. It requires many different things at different times along the way. There are two things though, that are essential. Without them, healing isn't possible.

First there has to be a willingness. This isn't the same as having the desire to heal (wanting to heal). Sometimes people do want to heal, but they hold back from embarking on the journey. They want to, but they're not willing.

I think it's safe to say that in our society there is a tendency to be intolerant about this seemingly contradictory behaviour. It looks like procrastination, and procrastination looks like lack of willpower. To many, that looks like laziness or weakness.

If you want to heal but you can't seem to find the willingness, it doesn't mean you lack the willpower to do it. It doesn't mean you're lazy. It doesn't mean you're weak. It may be that you have enough to cope with in your daily life already and the timing is not right. It might also be that fear is stopping you.

When we are hurt emotionally, often what we do to deal with the pain of that is alter our awareness to a certain degree. This is an automatic, unconscious reaction.

One of the ways we might do this is to deny that anything of importance happened. Or, we may create a different story about what happened by unconsciously adjusting our perceptions of the details. We may change our self-perceptions and our perceptions of others as well. We may adopt behaviour patterns that keep pain at bay. However we choose to do it, we stop pain by becoming unaware. It's an act of self-protection.

Pain stops when we move it into unawareness, but it doesn't go away. Have you ever had an old hurt suddenly come alive again in the middle of an argument with someone close to you? That's because that old hurt was put where you can't see it (out of your awareness), but it's still there. If you can't see it, if you don't acknowledge its existence, then you can't heal it.

The second essential element of healing, then, is awareness. The healing process continually invites you to come out of unawareness into the light, power and vibrancy of a life lived in full awareness.

It takes courage to accept the invitation. Unawareness is your safe haven. Healing asks you to risk giving up that safety, little by little as you are able, but give it up nonetheless.

It asks you to leave the familiarity of unawareness and enter into the frightening uncertainty of not knowing what you will find in awareness. All you know without a doubt, is that some of what you find will be painful. Healing asks you to venture in anyway, despite your natural human aversion to pain.

If you want to heal, but fear is blocking your willingness, it does not mean you lack courage. It means you lack whatever support you need in order to take hold of the courage you absolutely do have, and begin to act on it. If fear is holding you back, look for the support that will help buffer it enough to risk accepting the invitation.

Awareness is one of the greatest (and most hard-earned!) rewards of healing. It covers a broad spectrum that includes self-awareness, awareness of past events and how they have impacted you, awareness of your environment and everything it contains and awareness of how you relate to yourself, others, and your environment. All that awareness can deeply enrich your life. It brings clarity. It expands choices.

Becoming fully aware and learning to stay in the awareness of the present moment allows you to live your life as fully as can be. It gives you the ability to craft your life into whatever you want it to be and to direct it wherever you want it to go.

Healing demands a lot, it's true. But in the end, it returns far more to you than it asks of you.

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