
Self-Healing Newsletter

For People Who Enjoy Helping Themselves
September 2007

IN THIS ISSUE

▶ THE ULTIMATE SELF-HELP TECHNIQUE

HI EVERYBODY!

After a busy summer that ended with helping each of my three children move to new apartments, my wife and I are looking forward to spending some time relaxing and re-focusing on projects (creating a new website, to name just one!) that got put aside during the summer's frenetic activity. I'll be trying to soak up as much sunshine as possible during these early days of fall. I hope you'll be enjoying the new season, as well.

I'm devoting this newsletter to a self-help technique that I've personally found very helpful and that I've been teaching many of my clients over the last two months. The technique is called The Work. It was developed by a woman named Byron Katie (she goes by the name of Katie).

In her early thirties, Katie suffered from serious depression, rage, and suicidal thoughts. In 1986, she had the realization that her negative and judgmental thoughts were causing her to suffer needlessly. She developed a series of four questions (The Work) which she used as a starting point for examining her beliefs about herself, other people, and her life situation. As she questioned and evaluated the validity of her beliefs, her thoughts shifted and her depression lifted.

The Work provides a structured technique for shifting and neutralizing negative thoughts. My clients almost always report feeling more relaxed and peaceful after using The Work to question their stressful and upsetting beliefs. Once examined, their thoughts no longer hold the same power over them. According to Katie, the goal is not to let go of your thoughts. Rather it's to meet your thoughts with understanding – then they let go of you.

You can visit Katie's website at www.thework.com for a more in-depth description of The Work, as well as easy-to-use worksheets that will guide you through the process on-line. Her website also contains videos of Katie demonstrating the technique with people who are struggling with weight- related issues, medical problems, family problems, and anger.

The Work: Four Questions and a Turnaround

Below is a very brief description of how to do The Work. Be sure to actually write down your thoughts and beliefs (rather than just thinking about them) before asking the four questions.

Start by writing down a negative thought or belief, and then ask yourself the following four questions about the thought or belief.

1. Is it true?
2. Is it absolutely true?
3. How do I react when I believe that thought?
4. Who would I be or what would I be like without that thought?

After investigating your statement with the four questions, the next step is to **turn your statement around**. This Turn It Around exercise requires that you restate your belief to express the opposite of the original belief. For example, "John doesn't understand me," can be turned around to "John does understand me," or "I don't understand John," or "I don't understand myself." The turnaround statements often lead to a completely new perspective on the situation.

Turning Around a Marriage

I recently used The Work with my client, Doris (name has been changed for privacy). She kindly gave me permission to share her story.

Doris came to see me because she was feeling very anxious and experiencing marital problems. Although she loved her husband of twenty-five years, she said that she could no longer tolerate his treating her "like a child."

She cited his checking the locks on the doors after she had already locked them as an example of his treating her in this manner. Further, she believed that her husband looked down on her when she made a mistake, and this made her feel like a child, as well.

Her husband accompanied her to the next counseling session, and we discussed the situation. He said that his checking the locks had nothing to do with his wife; rather, it had to do with personal safety concerns that stemmed from his growing up in a rough neighborhood in the city. He also said he did not look down on his wife when she made mistakes; he simply wanted to have open discussions about possible solutions to problems.

Although Doris was somewhat reassured by her husband's comments, she could not stop thinking upsetting thoughts about his actions. In our next session, we decided to use The Work to see if that process could alleviate her upset.

She started by writing down her most upsetting thought: "When my husband checks the locks, he's treating me like a child." We proceeded to ask the four questions.

Question 1: Is it true?

Doris said, "Yes!"

Question 2: Is it absolutely true?

Doris said, "I don't know if it's absolutely true. I can't know for sure what he's thinking. So I guess the answer is no."

Question 3: How do you react when you believe that thought?

Doris said, "I feel nervous and like I'm a little kid. Then I get mad, and I start justifying my actions."

Question 4: Who would you be without this thought?

Doris replied, "I'd be more relaxed. I'd stop being mad at him and just enjoy him." I then asked her to picture what that would look like, and she said that she felt very peaceful.

Turn it Around

We then did the Turn It Around exercise, and Doris applied her original statement to herself. Instead of saying, "When my husband checks the locks, he's treating me like a child," she said, "When my husband checks the locks, I treat myself like a child." Doris looked startled after she said this. She shared, "I never realized before that the way I get defensive and start justifying my actions is just what a little kid would do. It's like I put myself in the role of a child. I'm actually doing it to myself." She then reflected on other situations with the new understanding that the very things she thought her husband was doing or causing her to feel she was doing to herself.

The next time Doris came to see me, she said that she was feeling much more relaxed and was no longer angry at her husband. She was using The Work on her own to investigate negative thoughts about her husband whenever they arose. I was delighted to hear that Doris now felt freer to enjoy his many good qualities, and actually looked forward to spending time with him.

Try The Work!

I encourage you to visit Katie's website to familiarize yourself with the four questions and the Turn It Around process. Be sure to watch the videos of Katie doing The Work with her clients. If you have questions or think you'd benefit from assistance with doing The Work, please contact me. Many of my clients find that

they are too close to their own issues and situations to identify core underlying thoughts and beliefs. Usually, after I take clients through one or two examples of The Work, they are able to do it on their own. Many clients find that The Work becomes second nature and something they can use on a daily basis to reduce upset and stress.

Take Care of Yourself!

Difficult emotional concerns that used to require lengthy therapy now can be resolved in a relatively short period of time. There is no need to suffer! If you or someone you care about is struggling with any type of emotional upset or trauma, please call me at (630) 960-2887 or email me at dlippmann@att.net to schedule an appointment. To learn more about my services, please visit my website at www.wellness-innovations.com.

Best wishes,

Dan Lippmann, LCSW, BCD

Director, Counseling & Wellness Innovations
445 W. Jackson Ave., Naperville, IL 60540 / (630) 355-7250
1000 Maple Ave., Downers Grove, IL 60515 / (630) 960-2887
Email: dlippmann@att.net
Website: www.wellness-innovations.com

P.S. I want to thank all of you who have recently referred friends and family to me. If your friends would like more information on my services, have them visit my website at www.wellness-innovations.com. Please forward this newsletter to anyone who is experiencing stress or emotional upset.



Dan Lippmann has more than 25 years of individual and marital counseling experience. In addition to being licensed, he is a Board Certified Diplomate in Clinical Social Work. After facilitating his own recovery from a chronic pain condition in 1987, Mr. Lippmann began collaborating with experts in the field of mind-body health to develop innovative stress reduction and wellness techniques. He has been cited as a "Master Practitioner" in the book, Light Years Ahead, and in July 1999 his work on stress reduction was featured in the Chicago Tribune. He has also been interviewed about his work on radio and television. To receive this free monthly email newsletter, visit www.wellness-innovations.com.