

Surrendering Discouragement

April 27, 2014

Very recently I had to let go of a dream I'd been keeping alive for a long time. I'm saddened because I couldn't control the outcome -- the person I held the dream for -- so I want to talk to you today about turning around feelings of discouragement.

For the past week or so I've felt so discouraged, as though there were something empty inside of me now. A large part of my creative energy went to keeping that dream alive, and when I had to let it go, well, I feel empty. My mind keeps flitting back to this emptiness. Like a toothache, it's painful but I can't seem to leave it alone.

Intellectually I know that I have to distance myself from this feeling, and that I can. My happiness was not dependent upon that dream coming true. I know with my conscious mind I can think my way out of this discouragement, but it feels like a huge effort.

So, confronted with this discouraged feeling I am presented a few choices:

1. I can indulge in it. Let it wash over me and feel the grief deeply.
2. I can discipline my mind to stop thinking about it, to turn my thoughts to happier things, even to use self-hypnosis to create a new future without that empty hole.
3. I can talk about it endlessly with my friends or therapist
4. I can surrender this feeling to God.

For the first option, indulging the grief deeply, I *could* avoid it (I'm good at that) but I know its important to move emotions through us. Spirit people say about grief, "Don't memorialize it." I remember when I first heard this: my client's mother came through showing a Victorian-era carving of a weeping angel. The spirit mother said, "Try not to give sorrow weight, give it light instead." Another client was grieving and couldn't get past it. Her grandmother in spirit saidm "Grief naturally pools as rainwater does. If we have good drainage it moves through us; it fills up and drains away. But if we don't have energy moving through us it can pool up and get swampy and heavy. Then all we see is this pool of grief and we begin to stare into it as Narcissus did. It can become a little bit self-indulgent. Then we're not honoring the people we're missing, the times of our lives that have changed, or the future that's waiting for us."

The spirit people don't suggest we bury or deny grief, but that we find a way to move it through. For me, surrendering to the feeling of grief is scary, because it *is* very indulgent. That's not to say enjoyable, but it's sticky! And I know myself: I can get quite comfortable under its weight. And the stickiness is a valid reason not to move on or through.

For the second option: I also know I can discipline my mind. My training as a hypnotist and a general student of the Law of Attraction says I get what I focus on -- even if its something I really don't want. If I keep returning to that let-down, the new emptiness, I'm going to perpetuate

it. Repeated focus on an idea or feeling has been shown to settle into our subconscious mind until it becomes second nature. If I turn my thoughts continually to the positive whenever my discouragement washes over me, in time it will atrophy and I'll enjoy emotional distance from it. Yet I fight with myself on this. I want to be in touch with this sorrow, I don't want to let it go. It's hard to accept I have to let this warm friendship go. In this way I'm in danger of giving myself mixed messages, which (with repeated focus) will perpetuate my sense of discouragement.

The third option: I can talk about it, talk it out. But this doesn't always work either. Sometimes this can keep us stuck in a cycle. My mother was a problem for the first 40 years of my life, at least 25 of which I spent in various forms of therapy, talking talking talking about it. See #3 for the problems inherent in repeated focus on an idea.

The fourth option is surrendering the feeling to God. But what does surrender mean, besides the obvious idea of giving something up? It means when I have a feeling of deep sadness, I simply offer it to God. I don't say, "Take this from me," or "Make the pain go away." I say, "This is my sorrow and I give it to you so you can share my burden." This allows me to *feel* the grief without indulging in it. I can share it, but unlike with a therapist or a friend, I'm not sharing it for analysis or to put it in an easier place.

I'm just stating: "Here it is, share it with me." And the pain is lifted.

This is better than all three other options because it supports the growth that comes naturally when we move through sorrow; the relief we feel as we heal is genuine. It's beneficial because we're not indulging or denying, simply processing.

And when I turn my thoughts to God, for any reason, I feel less hopeless. I understand that I'm part of God's own thoughts and creations. I remember that my spirit is *whole* already and doesn't need fixing.

I'll leave you with this beautiful line to consider from Romans 15:13: *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.*

Amen.