

PSYCHOBIOLOGY OF SOUL LESSONS

Counseling Skills:
Listening for the 9 Key Soul Lessons

Part 2 of 3



PSYCHOBIOLOGY OF SOUL LESSONS

SOUL LESSON 2: FORGIVENESS



FORGIVENESS

- This may be, perhaps, the second most important and potent soul lesson
- When we live in unforgiveness, we live in protest, dispute, and we hold those energy within our own body
- Forgiveness is tricky
- It does not mean we approve of someones poor behavior towards us. It doesn't mean that we kiss and make up, though it can. It simply means that somehow, somewhere inside of ourself, we have moved on. We have given our pain, anger or hurt over to a higher power, or we've begun to simply let it go and learn the lessons we can best extract from a difficult situation. We are liberating ourselves from needing to hold onto someone else's mistakes
- Forgiveness means we recognize that people are generally doing the best that they are capable of doing, even though that may fall far short of good or healthy

WHO MIGHT WE FORGIVE

- Parents
- Sexual Abuse
- Men, Women
- The World
- Self
- Whoever betrayed us
- Whoever abandoned us
- A past partner
- Life
- God



FORGIVENESS AND PARENTS

- Many people who are faced with eating challenges and body image concerns have not “forgiven” their parents
- We often hold our parents as responsible for our woes and our condition. We hold them as accountable for their bad parenting
- And perhaps rightfully so. Yet, at some point, we must graduate from blame and judgment and unforgiveness towards parents. Why?
- Because we come from them. We have half of each of their DNA. We are connected to them deeply. Attacking them is ultimately attacking self. Forgiving them is something we do for ourselves, first and foremost



FORGIVENESS

- Postulation: when we have not forgiven our parents, we have not fully approved of our own existence, our own self. We will find it difficult to let go of or graduate from our eating concerns
- Postulation: when we haven't forgiven our parents, we're technically still "living in their house". We're not stepping into our own power or adulthood, and hence may continue to struggle with food & body
- Is this true for everyone? No. But might it be true for many people, or for a particular client? Yes...
- We don't need to forgive people directly to their face, though that can often be very powerful. It happens, at least, within us

FORGIVENESS

- Consider doing a **“forgiveness inventory”** with your client
- Who are all the people they hold as unforgiven, and why
- What is the benefit of not forgiving each person?
- What is the drawback of not forgiving each person?
- What would forgiveness look like for each person?
- Ask your client - have you ever had the experience of being hurt, abused, betrayed or simply done wrong by someone, and you eventually had an experience where you somehow forgave them and moved on? If yes, then that’s the experience your’e looking to create by forgiving XXXX...

PSYCHOBIOLOGY OF SOUL LESSONS

The state of unforgiveness generally exists as some combination of anger, resentment, rage, disappointment, blame, and a deeper sadness. All of these emotional experiences create some degree of physiologic stress response

REMINDER

- The physiologic stress response can be present in **any** Soul Lesson
- So for example, it's a literal stressor to hold onto resentment, anger, hurt, betrayal, victimhood and unforgiveness...
- And the physiologic stress response **can** lead to -
- Weight gain, weight loss resistance, deregulated appetite, inability to build muscle, decreased calorie burning capacity, increased fat deposition, elevated insulin and cortisol, increased inflammation, nutrient wasting, decreased immunity, decreased energy, decreased mitochondrial function, decreased thyroid and growth hormone, and so much more...

FORGIVENESS

EXAMPLE/STORY:

Diane, age 36, administrative assistant, live-in boyfriend, enjoys skiing, hiking, movies, outgoing, says she is dealing with approximately 20 extra pounds since age 15. Extreme dieting and exercise can work short term, but she gains it right back. It's become harder for her to lose weight no matter what she does, and she wants to weight off permanently



PSYCHOBIOLOGY OF SOUL LESSONS

DIANE: A DEEPER DIVE

- Dad was in military - she seldom saw him
- Dad had affairs
- She idolizes her father on the one hand, but he caused her mother so much pain
- Diane is extremely angry at her Dad, blames him for her mom's depression and cancer and death



DIANE & WEIGHT & FORGIVENESS

- Her mom always felt that she wasn't good enough, attractive enough, and felt insecure about her body and her weight, and associated that with her husband cheating on her. Diane knew about this very well...
- Diane, on some level, is playing out a symbolic version of her mother's experience. She feels she needs to lose the weight to be truly lovable. This symbolically saves her mother, and saves the marriage. And yet, she can't keep the weight off because she is caught in a trap of which parent to identify with
- By forgiving her dad, she can set herself free of being a child in her parents house who is trying to save everybody and make it all okay. She gives her parents their story, their journey, without trying to save them. She matures...

PSYCHOBIOLOGY OF SOUL LESSONS

DIANE: THE WORK

- Forgiveness - it's time...
- 3 months focused on this issue alone: journaling, forgiveness letters, talks with Dad, with her siblings
- A 10 pound weight loss after a total of 5 months without any dieting
- Diane was lighter, closer to her family, learned about her dad, saw him in a new light, and saw her own relationship in a new light



PSYCHOBIOLOGY OF SOUL LESSONS

SOUL LESSON 3: SLOWING DOWN



PSYCHOBIOLOGY OF SOUL LESSONS

Many people have a speed and pace that, unbeknownst to them, is out of control...

High speed living generally creates stress physiology.

This can lead to food or health concerns, and we often address the problem where it is not...



SLOWING DOWN

- At first glance, this might not seem like a significant life lesson or soul lesson. For many people, this notion might even seem trite
- And yet, our pace of living is often far more toxic to our body and being than we realize
- Assertion: we live in a world that increasingly demands of us, programs us, and conditions us to move at an artificially fast pace that has us often moving through life in some version of a physiologic alarm response
- Fast living, pushing, not smelling the roses, not having enough time, the busyness of having a family, a job and taking care of all of life's necessities is simply not easy...



SLOWING DOWN

- The point: we live in an atmosphere of speed and push
- So many cultures have adopted a frenetic pace of life
- The result is that we eat fast, move fast, parent fast, vacation fast, think fast, drive fast, and move through life at a pace that we believe is normal, but is out of alignment with who we truly are
- In such a state, we lose our connection with body wisdom
- In such a state, we lose connection with the executive function of our brain, the prefrontal cortex, where wisdom and higher thinking reside

PSYCHOBIOLOGY OF SOUL LESSONS

ASSERTION:

The more we are in survival thinking and survival based living, the faster we move, and the more the wisdom of Life speaks to us through symptom



SLOWING DOWN

- Slowing down is about **reclaiming time**
- Slowing down is about **reclaiming relaxation**
- Slowing down is about **feeling**
- Slowing down is about **listening & noticing**
- Slowing down is about **letting go of living in survival**
- Slowing down is about **embodiment**
- Slowing down is about **being fully human**
- Slowing down is about **trusting life**

PSYCHOBIOLOGY OF SOUL LESSONS

Slow is natural, is true, is usual, and always precedes and follows “speed”

“The serene and tranquil set the rhythm of the world...”

Lao Tzu



SLOWING DOWN

- Study your client
- Are they trapped in a higher speed
- Is life overwhelming them
- Do they feel burdened by too much to do
- Do they talk fast, eat fast, move abruptly, do they “drop in”, can they focus with you, do they have downtime, quiet time...
- If so, and if they have come to you with a food, body or health challenge, then they are most likely locked into some degree of physiologic stress response and all its attendant symptoms
- Meaning, they cannot truly heal or transform their unwanted eating challenge until they learn to access “slow”



SLOWING DOWN

- We cannot give our clients more time and less stress
- People will be very clear about why they don't have time to slow down or why they cannot relax, given all the life challenge that's on their plate - and in many ways, they are right...
- But, every one of us can learn how to slow down, relax, breathe, and find a bit more peace within all the chaos
- It's oftentimes about creating **moments of wholeness**
- And for many people, they do indeed have the ability and wherewithal to slow down - they just don't know it

SLOWING DOWN

- Clients who present as “overwhelmed” **must** learn to access other states. Without that, your work with them will be unrewarding
- In other words, we can literally have a “state addiction”
- Humans can get “addicted” to stress, to complaining, to being high, to depression, to apathy, to any feeling or state
- This is about letting go of a state addiction - not forever eradicating the state itself, but learning to access other states
- Slowing down is a **practice**
- Slowing down our life, our mind, our inner world, for so many people, is an important soul lesson...

PSYCHOBIOLOGY OF SOUL LESSONS

SOUL LESSON 4: RECLAIMING THE HIGHER FEMININE



RECLAIMING THE FEMININE

- We live in a world of ever changing definitions of gender, the roles of women, the roles of men, changing beliefs around sexuality and more...
- With all this change, there's often a collective confusion around what it means to be a woman, a man, a boy, a girl...
- Our changing culture around the masculine and feminine polarities often goes unexamined and unquestioned
- As a consequence, there are many people in suffering and pain when it comes to food and body and life - and it's directly tied to the uncertainty and confusion around the masculine and feminine archetypes

RECLAIMING THE FEMININE

- In our collective efforts to make the sexes equal in the eyes of the law, of society, of religion - we often end up “neutering” both sexes and making them equal in nature and character and expression
- Masculine and feminine are equal in the eyes of the universe, but surely **different**
- When we don’t respect the difference in these nuances, unwanted eating behaviors are often the result
- Many women have exiled a part of their feminine archetype as a way to comply with trying to be “equal” to men
- Observationally, many women have been taught to **overemphasize** their masculine polarity, while many men have been taught to overemphasize their feminine polarity



RECLAIMING THE FEMININE

- For many women, their soul lesson is to reclaim the Feminine
- This means a higher and more fuller definition of the Feminine
- This means noticing the places where they have not fully nurtured the qualities of the feminine in their daily life, and in their inner world

THE FEMININE ARCHETYPE

Nourishment, the body, the earth, a flow, our naturalness, our connectedness, body wisdom, emotions, sensuality, softness, surrender, care for the world, beauty in all things, love, cooperation, harmony, rhythm, tuning in, intuition



THE FEMININE

Reclaiming the Feminine means letting go of forcing the body, fighting it, dieting it, punishing it with exercise, holding down its emotions. It means that we relax more, be open and surrender to gentler flow

THE FEMININE

- Reclaiming the feminine means letting go of self assessment via numbers - the amount on the scale, the number of calories we eat , the number of calories we burn, the number of fat grams we consume...
- Reclaiming the higher feminine means letting go of perfectionism and being in our body, inhabiting it, rather than constantly trying to critique and judge it
- Reclaiming the higher feminine means self care, it means letting go of attack - especially self attack

CASE STORY

- Portia, 45, mother of three, divorced, outgoing, outspoken, quick thinker, dedicated mom, works in the corporate world in sales, binge eats at night, gaining weight, can't lose it, tired of dieting, exercises regularly but forces herself to do so, proud of her accomplishments, tired of the grind, has an opportunity to step into a higher managerial role in her company, not sure what to do - more money, more work - and she is seeking help in getting rid of binge eating and losing about 30 pounds

PORTIA: A DEEPER DIVE

- She's tired of the corporate world but has a hard time admitting it
- She set out to prove years ago that she could raise the kids on her own, support them, mother them, father them
- She set out to prove that she could be as good and better than the men in her sales teams
- Portia has been emphasizing a "highly masculine" archetype and existence
- Perhaps it's time for a change

PORTIA & THE FEMININE

- Considering the possibility of letting go of her job, slowing down, and taking a new and far less demanding opportunity in her friend's small business made her glow
- We looked at her binge eating and weight from a larger perspective - it's time to welcome back in a more feminine mode of existence in all of her life
- This for her was a big breath of fresh air, a let go, a release, an opening into something she knew deep inside she'd been missing
- It was a big course correction
- A soul lesson...

REMINDER

- Once again, to put this into a metabolic perspective:
- The stress (long term, low level, ongoing physiologic stress response) of overemphasizing an archetype, a way of being that does not match who we truly are - can powerfully impact the body
- Conversely, adopting an archetype that is longing to be expressed in us is a big, deep relaxation - a physiologic relaxation response - where the body can begin to heal, and to step into its more natural metabolic state...

PSYCHOBIOLOGY OF SOUL LESSONS

THIS IS THE END OF
Psychobiology of Soul Lessons - Part 2

PLEASE GO TO
Psychobiology of Soul Lessons - Part 3

