

## Forgiveness Sanctuary

### Three Letter Process

#### FIRST LETTER

*Let's now experience one of the tools in the book – the Three Letters.*

*T-Up: This exercise is given in the Radical Forgiveness book, Chapter 24, page 259. Basically the idea is that you write the first letter from the point of view of the victim, venting your feelings and blaming the other party. The second letter is written – still from a victim's standpoint – but now with some measure of understanding of why they might have done what they did, and exhibiting some compassion and empathy. "There but for the grace of God go I". Right now though, we are just going to do the first one. We'll do all three by the end of today".*

(Stress that if they do the three letters exercise at home, they should do all three, even if they are a day apart).

Review the five stages with emphasis on the first two stages, 'telling the story' and 'feeling the feelings' and relate them to the first letter. Remind them to avoid the spiritual bypass, and to be the total victim. Tell them to exaggerate everything. Be vitriolic, tell it like it is/was, and how they really felt or feel! No excuses or compassion in this letter, please. This is where they are 100% in their victimhood, where they can confront without consequences. ***By the way, never, never send the letter!!!***

- **Write the First Letter of Three:**

*Get with your partner again. You'll be taking 15-20 minutes to write this first letter, so a short little paragraph won't do. After you're finished writing the letter, share it with*

*your partner. Partners should listen carefully and listen for what has been left out that they shared earlier in the verbal telling of the story. Remind them to put it in the letter. They also should listen for the spiritual bypass. "If you even smell a hint of a spiritual bypass, call them on it." Encourage them to be real and to tell it like a victim.*

**Music:** Still lower chakra music as before, not heart or ethereal music.

- Review the third step: Collapsing the Story. You might want to read out what it says in the book about this step.
- **Collapsing the Story:**

*This step looks at how our story began and how our interpretations of events led to certain (false) beliefs forming in our minds that have determined how we think about ourselves and how we have lived our lives. When we come to see that these stories are, for the most part, untrue and serve only to keep us stuck in the victim archetype, we become empowered to make the choice to stop giving them our vital life force energy. Once we decide to retrieve our energy, we take back our power and the stories wither and die.*

*It is also at this step that we might exercise a high degree of compassion for the person we are forgiving and bring to the table some straightforward, honest-to-goodness understanding of how life often is, just how imperfect we all are, and the realization that we are all doing the very best we can with what we are given. Much of this we might categorize as traditional forgiveness, but it is nevertheless important as a first step and a reality check. After all, most of our stories have their genesis in early childhood when we imagined that the whole world revolved around us and that everything was our fault.*

*So this is where we can give up some of that child-centered woundedness merely by bring our adult perspective to bear on it and confronting our own inner child with the plain truth of what really did or didn't happen as distinct from our interpretations about what we think happened. It is amazing how ridiculous many of our stories seem once we allow the light in. However, the real value in this step is in our releasing our attachment to the story, so we can more easily begin to make the transition required in the next step (i.e. the reframe).*

## How a Story Gets Formed

**Demonstrate the Spiral.** Speak of a 5 yr. old girl. Father leaves Mother. (Father leaves ME is the first interpretation).

*"I thought that my father loved me, but he has left me, so he must not love me anymore. He always told me I was Daddy's little girl but he must have found something about me, after 5 years, that made him change his mind. There must be something wrong with me. If my Daddy stops loving me after 5 years and abandons me, then all men will probably leave me after 5 years, once they find out how bad I am".*

*The event (Father leaving) is the only part of that story that is true. Let's say it is 10% of the whole story. The rest is INTERPRETATION. 90% of the pain is in the interpretation.*

Then show how replays of the same story over and over compounds the pain. Draw mini-spirals, each with their own pain centers.

## SECOND LETTER

- **T-Up For the Second Letter**

*This letter will not carry so much anger and vengeance as the first one, though you are still not letter the person off the hook. This is still basically traditional forgiveness. You are still saying that they did what they did, but now, having stripped all the interpretations away from the story in the previous exercise, you at least have a more realistic view of what they did. You also might be feeling some compassion for them – perhaps what they did was truly a mistake and fully regretted. You can perhaps understand the pain they feel about it, in terms of shame and guilt, which might at least be equal to yours. You might also see how damaged this person is due to their upbringing and life challenges and can bring yourself to make some allowances. It is also an invitation to soften your belly and your heart and extend mercy and understanding. Humility also, for as they say, "There but for the Grace of God go I". We might also look at how*

*many times we have done something similar ourselves, even if in a less serious way.*

*Write your letter with more of an open heart and show some understanding, humility and tolerance for this person's for this person's imperfection.*

- **Third Mandala**

*When you have finished your letter, do another mandala. Just being with your feelings and not thinking about it at all. Remember, it's not about art of being artistic in the least. Again, if you are inclined to be artistic, use your non-dominant hand so you don't produce a piece of art. Don't forget. **Share your letter and Mandala with your partner.***

### **Music Suggestions:**

Since you want to get them more into their heart chakra for this exercise, play heart music. Richard Schulman (or Shulman) richheartmusic.com and Steven Halpern would offer a range of this kind of music.

## **THIRD LETTER**

- **T-Up for Writing the Third Letter:**

*This is the "reframe" letter. It is where you write to the person saying something to the effect that you now realize that there was divine purpose in everything that happened and that in terms of the spiritual big picture, there was a certain perfection in it all. You might also say that you realize that you drew (x) into your life to give you the experiences you wanted in order to earn your required number of Karmic units and that instead of holding anger and resentment, you now feel a sense of gratitude for what happened. (Study Chapter 20 on this aspect of yourself. This is where you might want to read a reframe of Jill's story or give some examples of reframes).*

*Let's review once more what the reframe is. It is the fourth of the five stages, right?*

### Writing the Third Letter

*(30 min for both aspects)*

*Find a spot with your partner. What we're going to do now is write our 3<sup>rd</sup> letter. Help each other massage the language to make sure that there are no vestiges of victimhood still lurking, no hints of wrongdoings being given and so on. This is a fake-it-til-you-make-it-process, so even if you are not there yet, still write the letter as if you feel the perfection totally. And remember, you don't have to know what the perfection is. It is simply a statement of your willingness to accept that it might be there somewhere. You're going to have 25 minutes to write your letter and share it with your partner. When you finish that, you will do your 4<sup>th</sup> mandala. At 4:30, I'll ring the bell and at that time you will know that it's time to finish your letter sharing if you haven't already and start your mandala.*

### 4:35 P.M. Create The Fourth Mandala

*Allow at least five minutes after having finished your letter to complete another mandala. Remember to sign and date it, give it a title and number it #4. Find a spot on the wall somewhere and make a vertical totem pole of your four mandalas. There is still one more to do, so you will have a total of five. (Maybe, time permitting). And then share them with your partner.*

*Music: Meditative, ethereal, upper chakra music.*

**SWB # 35**

### 4:45 P.M. The Release Letter Plus Mandala

- **The Release Letter** is the final self-actualizing, self-affirming process in the workshop. It should promote a feeling of freedom, empowerment, and self-appreciation. Fill it in and then read it out loud to partners and have them witness it.
- **The Fifth and Final Mandala.** Once they have completed the Mandala, have them complete their totem or display.

**5:00 P.M.      Group Sharing of the Three Letter Process and Art Work**

There is one of the 5 stages that we haven't talked about and I would like to do that now. Does anyone know which one I'm talking about? Integration. Remember, we said that we integrated by doing something physical. Why do we do that? We do it because these wounds that we have don't just live in our minds, they live in every cell of our bodies. We need to do something physical to assist the body in releasing them and to anchor in the new story. The integration has been happening throughout the workshop. Coloring the mandalas is integration. Writing our stories is integration. Telling our stories is integration. Anything that we do physically will help to integrate the shifts that are occurring.

How you handle this will depend on the size of the group. If large, you may have to split them, as before, into small groups. Each person needs to have time to talk about their art work and get feedback from you, as well as to talk about their three letters and how they relate to their three middle mandalas.