



Stop ruminating on the past – Choose to let it go!

The tale of two monks and a woman is a well-known Buddhist parable. The story goes that two monks were traveling together, a senior and a junior. They came to a river with a strong current where a young woman was waiting, unable to cross alone. She asks the monks if they would help her across the river. Without a word and in spite of the sacred vow he'd taken not to touch women, the senior monk picks her up, crosses, and sets her down on the other side. The junior monk can't believe the older monk has broken his vow but doesn't say anything. An hour passes as they travel on. Then two hours. Then three. Finally, the now quite agitated younger monk can't stand it any longer: "Why did you carry that woman when you took a vow not to touch women?" The older monk replies, "I set her down hours ago by the side of the river. Why are you still carrying her?"

This story is a reminder to not dwell on the past in a way that interferes with living in the present moment.

Some things we hold onto cloud our mind and can prevent us from fully enjoying life. The irony is that whatever you're holding onto, it's probably bothering you much more than it does anyone else. Letting go usually involves some form of forgiveness or acceptance - whether it's of yourself, someone else, a situation or even an unknown third party. Letting go doesn't mean we condone a situation or behaviour. It's about lightening our load. When we let go of whatever is bothering us we set ourselves free - and get to reclaim that energy for ourselves.

"It's not the bite of a snake that kills you, it's keeping the poison in your body"

Whilst you can't change the past, you can learn from it and change how you feel going forwards.

Activity: While you may not wish to do anything about these right now, just listing what you need to let go of here will raise your level of awareness and you'll naturally begin to loosen your grip. So, simply list below what you're holding onto, what slows you down, what riles you up and anything that gets in the way of you being fully in the present.

You may struggle to identify benefits but there will be something or you wouldn't be holding on to it. Ask yourself, "What do I gain by keeping hold of this?" Perhaps by holding on to resentments, anger, hurt you don't need to accept your part in the situation, or perhaps it stops you from feeling how hurt you really were, maybe you get to stay in 'the right' or avoid dealing with someone.

What do I need to let go of?

How I benefit by 'holding on?'

1

2

3

4

5



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Just for a second, imagine letting go of everything on this list. How does it feel?

What have I learned about myself from doing this exercise?

If you need to let go of something you have done ask, "What do I need to do that will allow me to let this go?" (Perhaps you need to make notes in your journal of what you've learned, perhaps you need to make some kind of amends, apologise or find a meaningful way to make it up to yourself or someone else. We can't change the past, but we can make amends and learn from it.)

Remember to be self-compassionate. Applying self-compassion helps us to let go.

Try this self-compassion assessment <https://self-compassion.org/test-how-self-compassionate-you-are/> and try these exercises @ <https://tools.positivepsychology.com/self-compassion-pack>

Choose so time to quieten your thoughts. Try a simple mindfulness exercise. I like this one @ <https://www.mindfulnessmuse.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Cognitive-Defusion-Exercise-1.pdf>