

Introduction

You and I are going to spend the rest of our lives in the future. Hope is the ability to look into the future, see a future that is life-giving, and realistically know that we have the resources to achieve that future. Unfortunately, many of us are unable to work on creating our desired future because we are weighed down by grief and resentment over things that have occurred in our past. When we are grieving or resenting we are hope-less. This book is a practical guide for restoring you and others to a place of hope.

My Intended Audience

This book is written for clergy, coaches, psychologists, spiritual directors, and counselors who desire to incorporate their spirituality into their healing work. As a priest and healer I will use the stories of Jesus the healer to illustrate the principles and strategies of healing I am describing. I invite you, the reader, to incorporate the stories of your spiritual guides into your understanding of restoring hope.

Personally, I do not care for the many titles (“priest” or “psychologist” or “coach”) that apply to my work. I think life and the healing arts are about people coming together to discover the healing potential that resides within each of us, not about an “expert” imposing healing on someone. If we are to be experts in anything, it is to help people discover their own expertise. However, in writing this resource I found I needed labels to distinguish the helper from the person being helped. So, for simplicity’s sake, and since this book focuses on helping people develop the skill of forgiving and resolving grief, I have called the helper a “coach” and the person being helped the “client.”

Practicing Within Your Comfort and Competence

While egalitarian by nature, I do recognize the need for expertise and continue to hone my skills as a helper and healer. The strategies that are presented in this book range from conversational perspectives to specific processes that require varying levels of competence and confidence. Having taught many helpers in a variety of settings, and acknowledging the breadth of my intended audience, I know that my readers will vary in their level of expertise and their comfort with engaging in some of the processes. While challenging you to grow your skills, I also encourage you to stay within the realm of your competence and comfort. When either of those is reached, please refer the client to someone with the necessary ability to restore them to hope.

*I look to the future
because that's where I'm
going to spend
the rest of my life.*

— George F. Burns

*We are here on earth
to do good for others.
What the others
are here for,
I don't know.*

— W. H. Auden

*The second kick
of the mule has no
educational value.*

— Unknown

*You don't get to choose
how you're going to die.
Or when.
You can only decide
how you're going to live.*
— Joan Baez

*And by hope I mean
blues-inflicted hope
that is morally sound;
hope learned and earned
in the harsh realities of
daily struggle;
hope that remains on
intimate terms with death;
hope that is life-renewing
and opposed to the cheap
optimism of market-driven
America where Disneyland
is sold as heaven on earth.*
— Cornel West

*Knowing is not enough;
we must apply.
Willing is not enough;
we must do.*
— Johann von Goethe

Restoring Hope: Time Doesn't Heal Anything

Many people in the midst of distress such as grief or hurt are told that “it will take time” for the person to heal. Yet I have known people who have carried resentment for thirty years, or traumatic memories of the Second World War for over sixty years, with little relief. If time did heal, then these people would have been well and truly healed years ago.

It is not time that brings healing. Healing comes from what we do during that time. This book is based on discovering the strategies that people have engaged in to find healing. Many of us have actually done these strategies without being consciously aware of what we were doing. Restoring hope is about discovering these unconscious processes and doing them consciously with those hurts we have not yet resolved.

We cannot change our past. No amount of grieving or resenting will change the past. All we have of our past is our memory. While we cannot change our past, we can change how we experience our memories of the past. We can also choose what we allow from our past to inform our future. When we help people to consciously transform their memories and have control over how they allow their past to inform their future, we help them grow from being helpless victims of their past to people who are living fully in the present moment as they work to create their desired future.

A Realistic Hope

Genuine hope is not based on a fantasy of how you would like the future to be. It is based on both an image of a preferred future and a reality-based awareness that we have the resources to achieve that future. Passively “hoping” the future will be better is unhelpful. Imagine someone living in an abusive relationship, hoping that their abuser will change. That kind of hope is very unhelpful and even dangerous. Giving up hope that the abuser will change is a helpful first step in the person taking charge of and responsibility for their own life. Finding the resources to move out of the relationship and growing out of their victim consciousness is essential to establishing a sense of personal assurance and a realistic hope.

Don't Give this Book Away!

If you know someone who is suffering from grief or resentment, don't give them this book! Instead, use the processes in this book with the person to restore them to a place of hope. Knowing about grief and forgiveness will not help – doing the processes will.

Overview

This manual is divided into five sections:

1. An Introduction to the Appreciative Way

The core foundations of Appreciative Inquiry are presented and related to the task of resolving grief and resentment.

2. The Nature of Hope: Core Concepts, Resources and Processes

In this section, a basic understanding of the nature of hope and several core resources are presented. The resources include an understanding of unconditional love and compassion. In the processes sub-section, the reader will explore the ways they represent or structure experiences in consciousness and how these processes can be used to create healing.

The Appreciative Way and Core Concepts will then be applied to:

3. The Resolution of Painful Memories

4. Resolving Grief

5. Forgiveness and the Art of Resolving Resentment

For each of the applied sections I will provide two primary strategies to resolve painful memories, grief and resentment:

- A narrative approach which focuses on the content of a person's experience and the perspective from which the content is viewed.
- A structural approach to resolve these same issues. The structural strategies are likely to be new to many readers. They reflect the genius of the approach that Steve and Connirae Andreas have pioneered. These structural strategies provide ways to rapidly and sustainably resolve a wide range of human distress.

In addition to the processes for use with individuals, I will also present processes to work with organizations, such as a congregation that is dealing as a community with issues of pain, grief, and resentment.

Experiential Learning Exercises

Restoring hope by resolving grief and resentment is achieved by doing. If you are grieving or resenting, you can read and understand the steps in this book, but unless you actually do the steps you will remain in a place of grief and resentment. Throughout this book I have presented exercises to create a set of resources to facilitate the healing process. The exercises serve two purposes:

- To help the reader experientially understand a concept or strategy.
- To help a coach implement a specific strategy with a client.

*In three words
I can sum up everything
I've learned about life:
it goes on.*

— Robert Frost

*All the things we
take for granted
once were nothing more
than a figment of
someone's imagination.
We need to focus on
what we need to do
to make our dreams reality
rather than consider why
we can't achieve them.*

*Tell me,
what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and
precious life?*

— Mary Oliver

*In times of profound
change the learners
inherit the earth,
while the learned
find themselves
beautifully equipped
to deal with a world
that no longer exists.*
— Eric Hoffer

*A word to the wise
ain't necessary
– it's the stupid ones that
need the advice.*
— Bill Cosby

*Well, we can't
stand around here
doing nothing,
people will think
we're workmen.*
— Spike Milligan

Learning the Strategies

Some readers may find that they can do the exercises by themselves on their own. Personally, I usually need someone to lead me through them, even when I know what the steps are. To facilitate your learning I have created a set of resources that are available at: www.appreciativeway.com/hope.html.

- Audio recordings of all of the exercises. You can use the recordings to lead yourself through each of the exercises.
- Hard copies of the exercises.

As you are learning and working with clients, you may find it helpful to download the exercises and use them to guide you through a process. Many clients have reported that the coaches' use of a script gave them confidence that something specific could be done about their distress. Because the exercises are often conducted without reference to the content of a painful experience, I also encourage you to practice the steps with peers or colleagues in both formal and informal learning contexts.

Using the Exercises With Clients

Each exercise has the same format:

- Instructions for the coach are in plain text.
- Text in italics is a verbatim script for the coach to use with a client. Adapt these scripts so that you are working with your client and not doing a procedure to or on the client.
- A "... " indicates a pause to allow the client to complete the step. The pause may also be used by the coach to adapt the step to the specific needs of the client.

When leading a client through the exercises, you do not need to explain the theory behind the process. For many people it is easier to understand the process after doing the exercises, because the steps and results are profoundly different from what people have traditionally been taught about the nature of grief and resentment.

More importantly than serving as a guide for the process, your presence as a coach during the process validates and bears witness both to what the person has experienced in the past and in their present healing process. Your acceptance of the client is an important part of healing the alienation that people experience when they have been hurt or are grieving. I trust the exercises enable you to be a healing presence for the people you care about.