

## Letting go – an unofficial path to wellbeing

Most of us carry around things which affect our wellbeing. This article focuses on the “relatively” simple things that we can all start to let go of. Individuals can often generate a whole sack full of things; some of them bug you consciously whilst others just gnaw away at you out of your conscious attention. You may keep yourself excessively busy to avoid feeling the impact on you and even on your health. How often do you hear people say, “My energy suddenly dropped yesterday...with no reason for it!” Their response is often to take a pill or an energy bar; how much better would it be to look for the cause and let this one go for ever? So an unofficial path is the journey less often taken in our modern world - being curious about ourselves offers such incredible possibilities and opportunities to positively change our experience of health and wellbeing.



You can often see someone carrying around a lot of issues in the stoop of their posture, demeanour or speech. Most people have never considered for a moment whether they could let things go and what would be the affect on them and those around them.

As a first step, notice the number of negative compared with positive thoughts that you say and think every day. How is your balance tilted? It's the old saying of “Is the glass half empty or half full”. Negative talk affects our very being - you can try this out for yourself in just a few minutes and immediately feel the affects.

## How do you know you are hanging onto things unnecessarily?

You can tell you are when:

- you often think about the same topic and invariably repeat the same thoughts
- you over-react when someone mentions a specific topic or person
- you tell a story of a particular misdemeanour over and over again - perhaps expecting some different outcome
- you blown some things out of all proportion
- you focus on the bad things rather than the good events in your lives.

Is everything really such a big deal?

## What are the benefits of holding onto things?

Perhaps there are some good reasons for hanging onto things. Maybe you get some benefit from them - like the guy that can't stop smoking because it is the only time he breathes deeply. Once you have found another way to get these benefits it will be much easier to let go.

Imagine for a few moments what it would be like to let all your worries go. Out there, a few weeks or months in the future, what would it be like for you? Your negative thoughts are just habits you have got into, so can you live without them?



## The affect on your body and eventually your sleep

What is the affect of holding onto all this stuff? Does it affect your health? People know where they keep this stuff - "it is in my left shoulder", "my neck", "overloading my head" and "very often behind me in/on my back". Of course the long term effects of this can only be surmised, especially when there is metaphorical connection between the person who continually says, for example, "They are sick to the stomach of xxx" and then develops some intestinal problems. Many illnesses may have their roots in this type of metaphorical representation, for our dreams run in metaphor and any feelings we don't let go of are stored in our subconscious in metaphor as emotional baggage. So take care about how you think, how you talk to yourself and how you speak to others, your subconscious will be capturing everything, especially any unresolved issues.

When you find it difficult to get to sleep it is mostly because your brain is very busy replaying the events of the day or worrying about the events of tomorrow or the next day. It has been calculated that you will have more than 80% of the same thoughts today as you had yesterday, if you do nothing to change your perspective and, if that is not frightening enough, you may have 80% of the same thoughts again tomorrow.

## Where can you start?

You start the process of 'Letting Go' with a spring clean for your mind and body. First try making a list of all the negative things you are hanging onto. Some examples are given below, jot down your own favourite list:

- recent traffic and transport experiences
- recent bad experience or news
- conversations with difficult people
- holding a grudge about a family member or friend
- situations you dread
- arguments at home or work
- bad behaviour from family members
- a meeting that went badly.



How many times do we re-live or re-tell a bad experience; and how much emotion is still tagged onto it? This stops you moving on and letting the experience go.

And then there are all the emotions we are hanging on to, for example fear, guilt, loss, rejection, impatience, frustration. What emotions are you hanging onto what are normally connected with one or more event in your life. Add these to your list.

And what are the good things we hang onto (you can make a list of these too):

- all the fun times when our children make us laugh
- the times when we get straight to our destination with no hiccup
- the sun that shone all day and the birds that sung in the garden to accompany the arrival of spring
- the good emotions of say, happiness, love, calmness and delight. What are your list?

How about re-telling the good stories - making them even better each time; focusing on these will help you tip your balance more positively.

**So what is the comparison like between the two lists and what does it tell us about ourselves? Are we "half-full" or "half-empty"? It is a known fact that "half-full" people are healthier and live longer, so how about starting your own change today. It won't only affect you it will affect those around you too!**

## Let go - you will be mentally lighter and more energised

So having decided to let go of at least some of the things you hang onto, how can this be achieved? Importantly, as you let go of each one, really let go and SMILE and divert your attention to what really matters for you.

Here are some ideas to give you different perspectives that are easy to apply to your negative list of things that you would like to lose:

- **The easy ones:** Now that your attention has turned to some of this stuff, can you leave some behind without a second thought? Can you commit to yourself to lose them?. Imagine what it would be like to lose each negative thought or emotion in turn.
- **Life is not an emergency:** We all rush around in our daily lives, not thinking we have a choice or questioning who is creating these emergencies? What would life be like with less emergencies?
- **Sneezing etc:** Sneezing, coughing, breathing deeply in and out can all be physical manifestations of letting go of something.
- **"What is the worst that can happen if your fears are realised?":** It is amazing how often someone answers this question with "Well nothing really". So suddenly the person doesn't have to worry about the outcome, they can not only cope with all possibilities but often realise that the very thing they are worrying about never happens.
- **Being in 2 minds:** ever had that feeling that part of you wants to do one thing whilst another part of you wants to do something else and they are often the opposites. Try making up your mind once and for all, or just let one of the ropes go that are tugging you and see what happens.
- **Reframing:** can you just change the way you think about some event to give yourself more space to change. For example "I can't cope with the children arguing", could be reframed "it will be great for them to have strong personalities as they grow up". Suddenly you will let go of the emotion attached to the children arguing, you will see it abs building personality.



- **Put it in a box:** a lovely one when you want to sleep. Imagine a large box, with a very heavy lid, in a really peaceful place. Put all your worries in the box and shut the lid and let them go.
- **Focusing on the present:** When you recount some incident to yourself either from a past worry or about some future event, that may or may not happen, you avoid being in the present. When you focus on the present you can be at peace for a moment. Then get in touch with the negative emotion, feel what it is like in your body and just let go of it, as easily as dropping a pencil on the floor. You can even replace it with a positive one, for example let go of your frantic behaviour and just see what emotion comes to you in its place - it may be calmness.
- **Practice suspending judgment, trying to control others and needing to be right:** If you do not judge, try to control people or events and just suspend your need to be right you will find there are fewer things to hang onto.
- **Journal something that is worrying you:** If you write it down, it stops you going around in those endless circles, because the very fact of writing slows you down, enabling you to develop a new perspective. Learning something from it enables you to let it go more easily.
- **What really matters in your life:** Are you holding onto things that have got out of proportion? If they aren't important can you just let them go now?

Now you are dismissing some of the negatives, let us focus on bolstering up each of positives in turn to change the balance:

- **Allowing even more:** Really feel one of the positives on your list; add a scale you could turn it up from 1-10, try turning it up, as high as you can, what does that feel like? You can even let go of that too and open yourself to noticing more of this good stuff, and maybe next time you will start at >10 on your scale.
- **5 good things per day:** Every day write down 5 good things that have happened that day in a nice book. Initially you may struggle to find 5 good things. Resist the temptation to write down the bad things. If you persevere with 5 good things, after a few days you will be inundated with so many that you won't be able to stop writing at 5.
- **Catch yourself having a good night's sleep:** What did you do to get a good night's sleep; what did you eat, were you relaxed, did you take time to get in the mood for sleep, did you manage to still your brain from chatter?
- **Laughter:** Laughing about some incident and seeing the funny side of it can really turn something that is bothering you into something much easier to dismiss.

**Once you have got more balance in your life, I trust you will enjoy your new found freedom.**

*Olive Hickmott has a passion for helping people grow through personal development. She is an NLP Master Practitioner, Professional Coach and Personal Development Trainer and feels privileged to witness how people can improve their health and wellbeing by understanding better how their mind, body and spirit work together. Her web-site [www.empoweringhealth.co.uk](http://www.empoweringhealth.co.uk) tells stories of the successes individuals have achieved to overcome illness, disease and learning difficulties, inspiring others to repeat this success.*

*This article is an extract from Olive's new book, available later this year. One of the New Perspectives series, the book will go more deeply into all the possibilities that you can explore, including letting go and how to reach old age in health and wellness.*

*New Perspectives bring insights to "the man/women in the street" so that everyone has the option to take a more active role in their health, by understanding a few basic "how to's". The first one, entitled Seeing Spells Achieving, does just that. It simply explains to people why they may struggle with words and how they can change their relationship to reading, writing and even dyslexia, by understanding more about how their exceptional brain works.*

*Olive can be contacted through [olive@empoweringhealth.co.uk](mailto:olive@empoweringhealth.co.uk) or [www.empoweringhealth.co.uk](http://www.empoweringhealth.co.uk)*