

Module Four: Video Number 1:

First 2 Stages of the 5-Stages of Radical Forgiveness

Wow, you're really getting into this now, aren't you? Are you excited? Can you see yourself being a Radical Forgiveness Coach already? I want you to know that we hold you in our minds already as someone who will be brilliant as a Radical Forgiveness Coach and that you will make a huge difference in the lives of many, many people. We here are very excited for you.

OK, good. So, here we are starting to get into the nitty-gritty of actually doing the work, so it gets even more exciting from here on in.

As you already know, the Radical Forgiveness process comprises 5 Stages: 1) Telling the Story. 2) Feeling the Feelings. 3) Collapsing the Story. 4) Reframing the Story. 5) Integrating the New Story. However, I want to go over each one of them in depth since they determine how you coach someone in Radical Forgiveness. In this module, I'm going to focus on the first two, both of which seem to be obvious on first sight, but are nevertheless crucial to the process.

1. Telling the Story

Now, if you're already a trained Life Coach or therapist, I don't have to tell you how important it is to listen to the client, or how to listen to the presenting story. I, nevertheless, need to stress, however, that with Radical Forgiveness coaching, the "ear" that a coach brings to the conversation in terms of what they are listening "for" will be different and will even affect 'how' they listen.

As we saw in an earlier video in Module #1, a coach who is not trained as a Radical Forgiveness Coach is listening to the story with a problem solver's ear. At the back of his or her mind are those three medical model questions: What is wrong with her and how can I fix it? With Radical Forgiveness coaching, one's ear is attuned to listening for the clues as to how the perfection in the person's situation is being revealed and what the gift might be inherent in the situation.

As we know, everything happens for a reason and we, or more accurately, our Spiritual Intelligence, has co-created this situation in order to move us in the direction of healing or growing. It's quite a different mindset and a new way to listen, to which it might at first, be difficult to adjust.

Now, people can only begin from where they are, and a new client is almost always going to be coming from a place of victimhood. The likelihood is that he or she will be thinking, acting and feeling like a victim, and should be supported in feeling that way at this stage. We should listen attentively without "awfulizing" it in any way ourselves. We should never act as if we are shocked by what they tell us. That will only shut them down.

COACHING TIP: If they say something which they think might shock you, make sure you don't drop your eyes. Maintain eye contact at least for a few seconds and don't let them see that you are shocked. If they think you are shocked, you will lose their trust, and they won't tell you anymore. Simply show empathy and understanding. And don't stop breathing.

Their story is likely to be about something that has happened or is happening, or about something somebody has done or is doing to them such that they feel victimized in some way: betrayed, abandoned, cheated on, lied to, abused, hurt, etc.; and they need to feel validated as a victim. They will have a well-structured 'victim story' in place, and they will have a strong need to tell that story from the beginning to the end.

In order to release victimhood, they need to be able to own being a victim fully — and that includes feeling the feelings. I strongly discourage them from trying to water it down, making excuses for the perpetrator or giving spiritual interpretations. If they already know about Radical Forgiveness, I tell them to put it to one side, at least for the time being. I want them to tell it like it is, or was, and to feel the feelings.

We provide validation for how they might feel about what occurred by honoring it as being their truth at that time and having no judgment about it. We do this mostly non-verbally of course — simply through the action of listening and being totally present to their situation and feelings. Other than to ask probing questions and to reflect back what we have heard in order to clarify the story, both for them and us, we say nothing.

We don't jump in with any directive about how they *should* feel or how they might look at things differently so they can feel better. This is not the time to intervene. We simply let them tell the story.

It goes without saying, of course, that we will have already created an atmosphere of safety and support for them to tell the whole truth and to fully express their feelings, no matter what they are.

It is not unusual for the client to have never had the opportunity to tell their story in its entirety to anyone before — let alone have it validated — and even if nothing else happens in that session, the client will almost always feel a great deal better for having just been able to tell it. Being listened to is extremely healing in itself. Probably 95% of the process is simply listening.

Besides the benefit to the client, being able to hear the whole story with all its twists and turns, asides, and loose comments gives us the opportunity to listen for the vital clues that might indicate what is going on at the spiritual level. As you know, the first level of the storytelling comes from the conscious mind, but as time goes on, the client begins to let things slip out from the unconscious mind, usually in an offhand comment or aside which might easily be missed if we are in a problem-solving frame of mind.

We play detective during this phase, gathering data, looking to see where the energy might be flowing and what subtle patterns might be revealed. We're looking beyond the presenting problem and the everyday reality in which such problems have meaning, to what is meaningful in terms of that "other-world" reality which we call the spiritual big picture. Again, Jill's Story is the reference for this form of inquiry.

COACHING TIP: Watch the person's eyes. If they look up to the right, they are accessing visual memory. If they look up to the left, it is an auditory or cognitive memory. If they go down, they're accessing their feelings. And, if you see that happening, say nothing. Let the moment pass. You

can ask them what they were feeling in that moment, but since you are a Radical Forgiveness Coach we don't want you to drive them down too much further into their feelings.

2. Feeling the Feelings

This step requires that the client feels safe enough and is willing to feel the feelings they have around a given situation and to let the tears come. If anyone tries to forgive using a purely mental process, thus denying that they feel angry, sad, or depressed, for example, nothing much happens.

Even though for you, as a Radical Forgiveness Coach, you will be walking a bit of a tightrope, not wanting to go too deep into emotions, feeling the feeling is the vital step that many so-called spiritual people want to leave out, thinking that they shouldn't have "negative" feelings. That's denial and misses the crucial point that the authentic power resides in the feelings. You cannot heal what you don't feel. The energy that is attached around a particular issue is pure emotional energy and needs to be felt before it can be released.

Some people do their best to block their feelings. One way is to make a joke about the situation, especially self-deprecating jokes. But, don't buy in by laughing with them. Another form of this resistance to feeling feelings is the **spiritual bypass**.

Many people, especially those who think of themselves as spiritual, feel that feelings are to be "given over" to Spirit. They believe that spiritual people don't have negative feelings, or worse still shouldn't have so-called negative feelings. You are sure to get 'spiritual' clients who will have become experts in doing the spiritual bypass and will do their best to tell you that they "have dealt with" a particular issue and have no feelings left around it. Don't buy it.

Indeed, one of the traps of the Radical Forgiveness perspective is to go too soon to the spiritual reframe, before really accessing the energy attached to the situation. So, don't be in a rush to begin reframing the story.

It also has to be said that many people in the helping professions are also habitual bypassers, addicted to helping others while not dealing with their own pain and avoiding their own feelings.

When people access their pain, this is the beginning of their healing, and it usually occurs quite naturally in the telling of the story when in the presence of a compassionate but non-judgmental listener. And, that's you.

COACHING TIP: Silence is creative. Don't be afraid to let time pass without a word being said. It is often in these moments that the healing takes place or an insight suddenly pops up. During this stage, the less that is said, the better, but stay very attentive for it is frequently during such moments that a vital clue shows up.

Feeling the feelings does not necessarily mean digging up the past and going over all the old pain and resentments. This is not necessary at all, and the fear of doing this is what keeps people away from therapy in general and Radical Forgiveness in particular.

In Radical Forgiveness, we simply work with whatever is upsetting the person NOW, knowing that in all likelihood it represents all the other similar situations that have occurred at other times. By forgiving this one, we automatically forgive all the others because energetically they're all tied together.

Our role then is to simply listen and to be with the person as their feelings emerge. Compassion, empathy, and sensitive responses to their story are all we need to offer — all the while, however, listening to what is really going on beneath the apparent circumstances being described. Vigilant listening for clues is very much part of our job. We will need those when the time comes to help the person collapse that story (Stage # 3) and move towards the reframe (Stage #4).

Good. So, that takes care of the first two stages of Radical Forgiveness. In the next video, we'll look at what is expected when we engage in collapsing the story.

OK. We'll see you then.