

BEFRIENDING YOUR BODY

Except from “Turn Stress into Bliss” by Michael Lee with author’s permission.

See for more details: <http://pryt.com/book/book.html>

Your body is a key player in your life. It is through your body that you will learn the most and through your body that you will change most everything in your life that needs to change if you choose to use it for such. So just like a carpenter who goes to the hardware store and buys a new tool, you will need to learn how to use the tool you call your body. It’s been there for as long as you have been on this planet. It has changed a lot in that time going from babyhood to adulthood. It has protected you at many stages of your life, it has adjusted to your changing ways, it has also most likely suffered from neglect or over use at various times, and it has most likely also been ignored lots of times. The first question you might ask yourself is “What kind of a relationship do I have with my body?” And before you answer it might be good to visit with your body for a while to find out what it has to say. Then see what it might be like to make friends with it.

EXERCISE:

Sit in a comfortable chair but choose one that’s not too soft. Set your timer for three minutes and close your eyes. You need to be able to sit fairly straight with your feet on the floor and your back long and straight but not strained. Place your hands in your lap with your palms facing upwards and the backs of your hands resting on your thighs. Begin to notice your breath entering and leaving your body. Don’t try to make any effort to change your breathing – just notice it how it is. Then notice your body as it receives your breath. Notice your feet on the floor, your legs, your hips, your buttocks, your abdomen, your chest and shoulders, your arms, your neck and your head. Then notice what its like for you to focus on your body in this way. Feel it fully... notice what it’s like to be right here right now living in this body. In particular watch for any thoughts that might creep into your awareness as you sit and simply be present to your body. Remember that there is nothing else you need to be doing other than just simply being present to your body – right now. What happens when you do that? What do you notice? Continue to watch and observe for five minutes. That’s right – **THREE WHOLE MINUTES OF DOING NOTHING EXCEPT SIT IN A CHAIR with your eyes CLOSED, BREATHE, AND NOTICE YOUR BODY AND NOTICE WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU DO THAT** – that’s all.

So after three minutes open your eyes but stay sitting in the chair. Ask yourself what happened during those three minutes? What did I notice about my body? In particular what did I notice about my relationship with my body? Do we have a good relationship – my body and me? Or do we not get along too well? There is no right or wrong answer to these questions – just your answers. Your answers will give you valuable information about yourself. As you are going to use your body as your teacher in much of this program its important to find out what kind of relationship you have with this teacher.

So let's say you discover that the relationship is lacking in some way. Maybe it really sucks and you discover you hate your body. Rather than beat yourself up about that just notice it as your reaction for now. Maybe even say it to yourself – "I just discovered that I hate my body" or whatever statement best described what you found out. Maybe there is a story associated with what you discover. Tell the story to yourself. Acknowledge the reasons for the relationship being in the state that it is and how it got to be that way. Also ask how would you like this relationship to be if you wanted it to change.

Now here's the kicker. The only person who CAN change your relationship with your body is YOU. Your body can't do it for you. But you can do it. It's like the words in that famous Kennedy speech... "Ask not what my body can do for me but what I can do for my body."

Usually if we want to create a better relationship with anyone or anything we can begin with a little ACCEPTANCE and FORGIVENESS. So whatever has happened between you and your body in the past can you simply ACCEPT that? Like in the famous Beatles song title – just "let it be". And if your body has let you down in any way in the past can you now FORGIVE it. We also know that relationships thrive with ATTENTION. Children do all kinds of things to get our attention and so do our bodies. Like children if they get negative attention they tend to act out even more. If I hate my body because it doesn't give me what I want in life it might just respond even more negatively. But if I can find a way to take care of it... maybe even to love it a little it just might respond in a different way. So ask... "What could I do this week to show my body that I accept it, forgive it, and love it.?"

And if you can't think of anything here is a list of possibilities:

Get a massage. Take a hot bath or Jacuzzi. Go for a leisurely walk. Dance to your favorite music. Go swimming. Play catch or some other game with children or friends that invites having fun with your body.

Notice that I haven't put things on the list like – go to the gym for a workout. Now that kind of activity COULD be on YOUR list but only if it meets certain conditions. If you are someone who can go to the gym and workout and really ENJOY it and FEEL GOOD DURING the workout from start to finish then it qualifies as a BEFRIENDING your body exercise. But if you go to the gym and grunt and strain and push your limits and hate every minute of it this does not qualify as befriending your body – you know what I mean? So if this is the case you will need to find a different way to BEFRIEND your body.