

Exercise 7: A Testimonial Dinner for the Severe Teachers

This exercise uses the broad perspective of time to reframe hurtful relationships and situations. With this perspective, you welcome people back into your life, thanking and blessing them for the unexpected good fortune that resulted from the apparent injustice that was inflicted upon you. Besides coming to terms with these "severe teachers," we can use this exercise to investigate how our own behavior unconsciously may have contributed to our victimization. As we witness our behavior from an objective platform that was unavailable earlier in life, we can take responsibility for actions on our part that unwittingly led to personal suffering. In this way, we can end the blame game and reclaim a sense of personal empowerment.

1. Sit in a comfortable chair, relax your body, and take some long, rhythmic breaths to center your mind.
2. Divide a piece of paper into three columns. In the first column, list the guests whom you are inviting to this testimonial dinner, those who have wronged you in some significant way. In the second column, describe the apparent injustice that was inflicted on you. In the third column, describe the unforeseen benefits, the unexpected good that resulted from their actions.
3. Using the broad perspective of time, say to each of the offending parties, "I understand now that you did me a great deal of good by your actions when you did _____ for which I want to thank you. I understand now that it was difficult for you, *and* it was difficult for me. But now that I forgive you, I am grateful for your contribution to my life."
4. As you consider how each of the offending parties treated

you, ask yourself, "What part did I play in being victimized? Did I have an unconscious program that made me an unwitting collaborator in this scenario?" If you uncover ways in which you sabotaged yourself, extend the same courtesy to yourself that you just extended to your severe teachers. Forgive yourself. As you free yourself from the blame game and take responsibility for yourself, you can release the energy that has been tied up in resentment and redirect it into your conscious growth as an elder.