

Thank You Betrayal... my gift, my teacher

Betrayal is a strong feeling that can be difficult to process. Why? Because the trauma of the betrayal creates fear, shame, secrets, and intensity. These feelings may even be mixed with love and longing for the person by whom we feel betrayed.

In 2009 I experienced a situation where I was hurt by someone I trusted. I was shocked and instantly felt helpless, confused, afraid and hopeless. I had a choice to make: Was I going to remain angry, bitter, or resentful and assume the posture of a victim? Or, was I going to embrace the pain of betrayal, understand it, and work through it to heal?

I would like to say I immediately took the high road, but I didn't. To cope and get through the initial shock, I repressed my pain.

Many times, people don't know how to deal with the emotional pain of betrayal because our culture doesn't encourage reflection and genuine expression of our feelings. Most of us become skillful at distracting ourselves by keeping busy with work in an attempt to shield ourselves from feeling the pain. Or for some, they self-medicate to ease the anxiety, stress, and hurt.

In the **Six Seconds Model of Emotional Intelligence**, we talk about the competency of "Navigating Emotions." When we use this competency, we harness the power of a feeling and use it to move forward. The first step is to acknowledge, and then to accept that the feeling is real. The problem is that feelings like betrayal are so painful facing up to the emotion seems almost impossible.

Experiencing a major betrayal is like experiencing a death. We have feelings of loss. Our hearts ache, our capacity to trust may be bruised and our innocence is tainted. When we're betrayed by someone we love or respect, the pain can be incredibly intense – perhaps even more than physical pain.

But just as the pain of an injury makes us slow down and rest, emotional pain has value too. Physical pain is a distress signal that some part of our body needs help. So, too, emotional pain is a distress signal that some aspect of our life needs help. As we take time to understand these emotions and consciously redirect thoughts, feelings and actions, we become more adept in dealing with situations like this.

So the next time you feel brutally betrayed, remember you have a choice. When you're ready to move forward, tap into the energy and information of your emotions. Allow the experience of betrayal to bring amazing insights about you and your relationships. Let it provide clarity as to who you are and what you want and need.

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