

Work in Progress

Published monthly by Michele Crawford

Work in Progress is an electronic newsletter intended to assist individuals seeking optimum well-being.

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Work in Progress March 2007 Volume II Issue III

Feature Article: Forgiveness: Choosing Happiness over Righteousness  
Part Three

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1) Note from Michele

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Dear Reader

When a transgressor takes the opportunity to make amends, he or she restores his or her own humanity. There is such a wonderful story of humanity being restored that even though it occurred hundreds of years ago, it powerfully resonates to-day.

In the late 1700's, a younger son of a wealthy family in England decided to make his fortune by hiring dock thugs and ships to travel along the coast of Africa and kidnap men, women and children to sell them into a life of slavery.

Becoming more and more rich and powerful, with his every possession being paid for with the absolute suffering of humankind, this man had a dream one night. In this dream, an angel came to him and told him he was going down the wrong path and he needed to make amends for all the torment he had orchestrated.

And that is what he did. He immediately shut down his business in the slave trade and dedicated the rest of his life to doing spectacular good works. He was instrumental in repealing the Slave Act in Britain decades before slavery was outlawed in the United States. And true to our greatest redemption themes, he wrote a beautiful song about his experience. You know the song as Amazing Grace.

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## 2) Feature Article: Forgiveness: Choosing Happiness over Righteousness Part Three

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Genuine forgiveness is not a pardon but a shared venture between two people. Violators need a process for earning forgiveness. It starts with the transgressor demonstrating full awareness of the anguish of the transgression as well as the intention of never repeating it.

Meanwhile, the hurt party is released to be less preoccupied with the injury and instead, to focus on the process of his or her own recovery. This process is eased by the work of the transgressor earning the right to participate in a healing, no longer damaging, relationship. When someone takes interest in our pain, then the pain can be released.

This process is completed with effort, care and fairness. First, a transgressor clearly acknowledges the transgression, then expresses empathy and bears witness for the pain he or she has caused. Next, he or she is willing to invest whatever effort is necessary so the harmed party can recover and let go. The final important component is for the transgressor to forgive him- or herself for injuring someone else. This progression can be enriching and meaningful for all involved.

Something also needs to be said about imagined transgressions. Again, semantics is a key factor here. The use of the words fault and blame are only appropriate when there is malicious intent. When bad things occur that are the result of an accident or thoughtlessness or even when the other person had good intention in mind; then that

person is accountable and responsible, not blameworthy or guilty of malevolent intent.

I often talk to people who use the words fault and blame indiscriminately. Whenever they use powerful words like these, they feel entirely entitled to their wounds even though there was no cruel objective. It may be appropriate to hold onto anger in these times but it is definitely not healthy.

For example, if I accidentally drive over your foot; I am not at fault. I am accountable but not blameworthy even though your foot hurts to the same degree either way. The physical pain subsides sooner when we view the act realistically as an unintended mistake. The emotional pain of blaming can last a lifetime.

I often see people in my practice who feel entitled to their rage and hate at offences they have labeled blameworthy and upon reflection, did not deserve to be placed in that category. Once they recognize the difference, they find the process of letting go and adjusting to the reality that bad things happen with the greatest intentions, they can be happier and more at peace.

When bad things happen, it's called life and the greatest gift we can give ourselves is to move on with forgiveness or letting go. The alternative is to be stuck in the injury, continue to suffer and not benefit from any gifts of meaning or significance... "that saved a wretch like me."

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3) About Michele  
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Michele Crawford is a therapist who assists individuals who are struggling with trauma, anxiety or depression. Her passion for her work remains embedded in being able to connect with you in your suffering, helping you find real solutions no matter how complex the issue may be.

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4) Counselling Services  
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Are you prepared to live with more happiness, optimism, confidence, self-worth and hope? If your answer is "yes," then your next step is to contact me for a free 20-minute phone consultation. We can then discuss how I might best help you resolve your problems of Trauma, Depression and Anxiety.

The benefits of counselling with Michele include: significantly reduced stress levels, an optimistic outlook in life, increased confidence and hope.

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