

In Therapy Day 6 - It's okay to be you

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[00:00:50] Katie

Hi there, it's the 9th of February. I'm feeling pretty good. I've been really concentrating on giving that inner child some attention and valuing and honoring her voice and her feelings. I've been walking a lot. I'm back at work now, but I'm meditating. I've been really talking kindly to myself and I've been doing the presence process. So when I start to obsess or my thoughts start to be very judgmental I've stopped myself and I've just taken a few minutes and I've actually discovered that silently meditating is really valuable for me.

And I've also just been very conscious of that harsh voice. And being aware of it is really helpful because it means that I stop it. Things are changing. The dynamic at work is changing. I'm not finding myself on the defensive or the offensive as much, of both. I'm just feeling kinder. Overall, things are pretty good at the moment.

Alex Howard

Hi, Katie.

Katie

Hi, Alex.

Alex Howard

So it sounds like things have been a bit more positive. So talk me through it.

Katie

Yeah. Since I last spoke to you and just continuing with the presence process and the meditation and just stopping when I'm feeling that my head is going a bit crazy, it's been really useful for me. I feel very much that I've just completely slowed down. And there was a point when... You won't believe this but my plumber has just arrived.

Alex Howard

If you need to go and deal with it that's alright.

[00:03:04] Katie

I might have to go upstairs, sorry. There's too much going on. Is that alright?

Alex Howard

Yeah. That's great. So you were saying that with the stop presence process and with the meditation that you just feel, things feel a bit more settled, a bit calmer.

Katie

So much so. There was a point before I did this, the stuff in the RESET program, where I was waking up in the middle of the night and my head was just going a million miles an hour. I feel that there's been a real big shift and that there's been this quest I've been on for so long it seems, to try and identify or reconnect with the inner, the real me. I feel that there's been some kind of merge of the two. I really do have a real sense of that.

And I can access that. When I'm doing the meditations I often feel that connection much more vividly. And when I was doing yoga last week she always says, set an intention before we start our practice. And my intention is always now to increase my love, I suppose, to that little girl and the nurture. And that's what prompted me to write the letter that I was talking to you about in the last session.

Alex Howard

We spoke about this last time. And I was saying that even just the action of writing it can be helpful but it sounds like you took a brave step and you sent it and you got a surprising response. Run me through, let's break it down a bit because I'd like to understand more of the narrative. So in writing the letter, how was that for you?

Katie

The discovery I have made, that penny drop moment I had in one of your sessions where I was just as guilty of neglecting and abandoning the inner child as anybody else, it enabled me to reach a point where I was willing to forgive myself so therefore I had to be willing to forgive other people.

And that was a really big shift for me, because for years and years I had so much pent up anger and resentment and bitterness and regret, I suppose. It was eating me alive. So having had that revelation, I think I would describe it as it gave me kind of inner confidence that it is okay to be me.

And actually, if I'm going to move forward in this spirit of forgiveness and peace, which is the way in which I want to live my life, then I have to walk the walk, not just talk the talk.

Alex Howard

There's the point where you can think about things, read about things, talk about things but until it becomes action it's not really integrated.

Katie

No. And my biggest fear, I think, was, yes I felt all these shifts inside of me, and I felt confident to walk into my future with this inner peace or this inner confidence that I feel that I've gained from doing this and other things, but then the thought of actually being me in an environment with those I perceived

were the ones who hurt me was really terrifying for me. And what will she say and what will he say and how will they react? And will I be strong enough to deal with all that? I don't think I will.

[00:07:07]

And then I started to get into fear again. And I hate that feeling. And I think that's really what prompted me to write the letter. And I wrote in a very, I wrote it at half past one in the morning. I couldn't sleep. I just felt this inner voice saying, you gotta just get this down on paper. And I have been doing a lot of writing as part of this journey as well.

Alex Howard

I only want you to reveal what you feel comfortable sharing, but what was the essence of the letter?

Katie

I decided to write it to all my, because one of my biggest things has been the secrets and lies I suppose, that somebody will say one thing to one person, a different thing to another person and everybody gets tied up in knots. And I've always hated that since I was little. I can't bear it. For me, it's just open, transparent honesty that I think that's how we should all be.

It doesn't mean to say you tell everybody everything but when you're deliberately not telling some people some things and telling other people things that are the opposite to what you've told other people, then it gets a bit of a headfuck.

Alex Howard

Stressful as well. It's very hard to be relaxed with people when you're like which version of me am I meant to be? Excuse my language but it's a headfuck.

Katie

It is. And that's what I just couldn't cope with.

So I made a very considered decision that I was going to write the email to all of them openly. I bcc'd everybody, but it was a letter that I wrote at the same time by email to everybody, so they will have all received it at the same time.

And I put in the subject line, I didn't want it to be confrontational in any way whatsoever, because that's not the spirit in which I'm trying to live my life now, so I put in the subject line, "love, peace and good health" so that they would... They think I'm a bit of a weirdo anyway, so that wouldn't surprise them.

I was very honest. I said I didn't know whether it was the right thing that I was doing, but I felt compelled to put pen to paper and just explain where I'm at, because there's been no communication between any of us for quite some time. And I just said how sad I was that we were such a fractured unit and that I couldn't see a way out.

And then I knew I had to be fairly assertive but lovingly assertive. You know what I mean? Because in the past I've been, "You did this!".

[00:09:42] Alex Howard

You'd been blaming and accusing and attacking.

At a point when you're attacking they defend. So you get that defensive reaction.

Katie

And over the years with various other things that I've done, I've learned that I can only change me and I can only change my behavior, and I'm completely powerless over everybody else or anything else. So that's the spirit in which I wrote it.

But I was assertive in that. And I said, I believe that the family had deep and complex problems going back probably generations and that it wasn't going to be an overnight resolution if there was going to be a resolution at all. The only way I felt that it could be resolved was if we all take personal responsibility and look at our part in the dysfunction. And then I said, and that's what I've been doing over the last 18 months, two years.

I mean, I've been on the journey for longer than that. This intense, personal, inner growth has being 18 months in the making since I've been working with you.

And then I just explained a bit how I felt as a child and the crippling, suffocating, paralyzing fear that I lived in for most of my childhood and my 20s, and that I had decided I didn't want to live like that anymore. I put some real effort into addressing the reasons and the causes why.

And then I just said, and I discovered that I had become, and this is what I believe so fundamentally, I've become this judgmental, critical woman with high expectations, relentlessly driving myself to succeed and I wasn't very proud of the person that I've become.

Alex Howard

There was a taking responsibility for your side, which I think is always a helpful way of inviting others to do the same.

Katie

Yeah. And that's kind of what it was. It was an invitation but it wasn't saying, "and you should do the same", or whatever.

And then I just said that I had worked to dismantle all those character traits or whatever it is, personality defects or whatever it is, over a number of years to try and dismantle each one. And I think that's when I let go of my belief that I was my work, which has happened since I've been doing this self esteem thing about if I'm not this successful career woman then I'm nothing. When I let go of that, that's when I felt this merge happen.

Alex Howard

That's very interesting.

[00:12:29] Katie

So I just explained in the letter what I've done and I was proud of the work that I have done and I liked the person that I've discovered.

Alex Howard

Say that again. I want to hear that again. You said you like the person you discovered.

Katie

Yeah. And I know what I found is somebody who hates conflict, who doesn't really care whether I'm a success or not as long as I'm happy and peaceful. And the peace, that's what I found.

And I ended my letter and I decided that I wasn't going to send it straight away. I ended the letter saying that I'm happy with who I am. I'm walking into my future with a renewed confidence or whatever, and self assuredness and I've accepted that the family issues may never resolve. I've got acceptance around that. It's not what I want, but I've got acceptance around it. And I have to accept that I might never have that family, that idealized family that I've always longed for.

And I said, I want you all to know that I take full responsibility for my part in that dysfunction and I'm truly sorry for the pain I've caused, for any pain I've caused any of you. And I hope we can move forward in some way or another. And I didn't prescribe how I thought that should look, what I thought that should look like or how I thought we should do that. And then I ended it, "I wish you all love, peace and good health".

Alex Howard

Wow. Katie, good for you.

Katie

And it came from somewhere else, or maybe it came from that inner child. I don't know.

Alex Howard

Maybe the little girl connected with something.

Katie

I feel a bit emotional saying that.

So anyway, I sent it, and then I had a response back.

Alex Howard

And talk me through the response.

Katie

So it made me cry.

[00:14:29] Alex Howard

In a good way, I think. Happy tears and sad tears.

Katie

Well it was sad and happy. I'm 50 and it's taken 50 years to get to this point. That's sad for me. And my parents are old now. And I felt that a lot, actually, the last few days that they're old.

And I read it and the tears started coming as I was reading it, I was on my own. And when I finished reading it I just thought it's time to forgive and move on. I really felt that. It was a real visceral feeling for me.

Alex Howard

I think this is a really positive step. It's a positive step for you because you were able to find that place where you could communicate in a loving but authentic and truthful way. And that was met in the spirit in which it was intended. But fundamentally, the issues haven't gone away. Your parents haven't suddenly transformed. You are on a path of changing. But the goal here is not that everyone agrees. The goal is not to get to a point where everyone goes, "Oh, okay. Now we've talked about it, we now agree with Katie's view of the situation, and therefore it's resolved and dealt with".

The goal here is for you to find a sustainable place of softness and healing in your heart and appropriate boundaries in the relationships. Because I think the danger here is that the objective becomes an unviable and unsustainable objective. That we're going to find some point of perfect union and marriage of ideas and understanding that is deeply healing on a heart level. But that isn't normally what happens because there are different perspectives and there are different experiences and you're on a proactive path of change and transformation and they may not be at this point in time, which means they can only see things through the lens of... One can only see a situation through the lens of their own dysfunction.

So they're not suddenly going to transform and change. And a dangerous path to go on is to think, oh, we've had a step forward that means it's going to get to this fantasized place. You're then only going to be disappointed.

Katie

It's really helpful for you to say that because I think I'm guilty of idealizing and also wanting anybody to think...

Alex Howard

Everyone sees it the way that you see it. You want to be seen in the sense they'll go, "oh my God, you're totally right. That's exactly what's been going on".

Katie

That's what I want.

[00:17:16] Alex Howard

Sorry, Katie. It's not what's going to happen.

So what I would say is it's almost like being at the casino and banking the wins along the way. So rather than going, right, I've got to win everything in the casino. It's going, I've just had a real win. I've expressed myself in a vulnerable, authentic way, and I've been met in a way which is ultimately loving and accepting and caring.

Sure, there are some bits in there that you might analyze and go, I wonder what's going on there, but fundamentally, that was a really kind and loving response.

So take the win. It doesn't mean that you don't try and progress it further, but be careful not to build up an expectation that's unreasonable of anyone, including of them, and then leaves you feeling frustrated. What I would do is focus on the love that is there and feel that, appreciate that, that your parents love you. They might not know how to show it in the perfect way. They might have plenty of their own issues. But aside from all of that, they love you enough to write you a letter like that. And I wonder how that feels.

Katie

I feel sadness.

Alex Howard

Whereabouts in your body is the sadness?

Katie

Always the same place in my chest.

Alex Howard

Is that okay to feel that sadness?

Katie

Yes it's okay.

Can you hear the knocking?

Alex Howard

Yes. If you need to deal with it that's fine.

Katie

It's the plumber who wants to come in this room now.

It won't happen like this again I promise.

[00:19:00] Alex Howard

It's fine.

Katie

Sorry.

Alex Howard

It's fine. I would have a gentle expectation of the conversation. I would also really aim to meet them in the conversation from the same place you wrote the letter. So rather than the sort of place that suddenly has some expectation and some excitement, or it could go further and is suddenly pulling for something and pushing for something, just see if you can step back and keep your boundaries and your guards where you need them.

Katie

I feel scared when you say that. It's almost like I don't trust myself to be able to do that.

Alex Howard

So what I would really encourage is before you speak to them do some meditation, do your presence process. Your objective in speaking to them is not to resolve any of this. Your objective is to stay connected to yourself. And the goal of the call is to practice staying in your body, connected to yourself whilst being in contact with them.

Katie

Okay.

Alex Howard

Yeah?

Katie

Yeah.

Alex Howard

Everything else is bonus. Because if you stay connected to you and you're not running ahead and you're not putting pressure on and you're not reacting, it gives the whole thing more space then to be able to breathe.

Katie

Yeah. I'll give them a call at some point next week. My mom, I know what she's like, she's just really tactless, but I get accused of being tactless as well, but she wrote back, she goes, "Yes. Okay. A call sounds nice. You will have to phone us because you've blocked us".

[00:20:49] Alex Howard

That's very funny. They can be unblocked.

Katie

I have unblocked them now.

Alex Howard

I'm mindful that you've got some distractions around you. Do you have any other questions for me for today?

Katie

No. Just about the RESET program, do you want me to carry on doing modules?

Alex Howard

I'm trying to remember, did I start you at the beginning? I think I did.

Katie

Yes.

Alex Howard

Keep going. So if you do modules six and seven between now and next time, I think that will actually fit really well with what you're working with right now.

Katie

Okay. Brilliant.

Alex Howard

Thank you, Katie. And well done. I'm really pleased to hear of the progress, and I'll see you in person, hopefully in a couple of weeks.

Katie

Thanks, Alex. Very much for your support.

Alex Howard

Good luck getting the plumbing sorted out. Take care.

Katie

Thank you. Bye.