



Coaching Secrets and Tips:

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Coaching is about change and how you can optimize your success in life and business. There is very little distinction between personal and business coaching because it all boils down to people and relationships. That is why I say "all business is personal". Change is the opportunity for growth and the more one grows the more successful, powerful and authentic we are. It is an ongoing process and professional coaching is a great tool to assist in the process. You can also coach yourself if you practice the tips.

Below find coaching secrets and tips #1 thru #10.

Secret #1

Stop Thinking. One of our biggest problems is that we think. Of course we really have no choice about thinking and really can't stop thinking. But while we are thinking a strange thing is happening ...we forget that we are thinking. We have a thought and it occurs to us as reality. Worse, we then think it is the truth. This is not effective, especially when you are stuck on a problem or issue. Think of thinking as if it's an autonomic action-like breathing or digestion.

The Man Behind the Curtain

What I'm talking about here is the everyday stuff that rattles around in the form of the constant all-pervasive internal conversation. It is like the little man behind the curtain in the Wizard of Oz and just as he said, "Pay no attention".

Change for the Better

When people come to coaching they want to change something for the better. Fine! The way to change is to start by getting the fact that you are not having thoughts; your thoughts are having you. They are running on automatic most of the time, conditioned and formed by your past, your emotional makeup, or the proverbial time your mother dropped you on your head.

What you think is not the truth. If what you thought was the absolute truth then everyone would agree on it-like gravity. But they don't, because thoughts are just a point of view and everyone has one.

Change your Point of View

But here's the good news. You can change your point of view. When you change your point of view everything changes. What looked like a problem becomes an opportunity or just another challenge. What looked risky becomes potentially fun.

Your point of view is like the operational system in your computer. So, the question is; are you committed to staying stuck with the same old thought because you think it's the truth or are you willing to change your point of view and move on to greater success? If you want to get unstuck, follow the professional coaching tip below.

Tip #1

Here is an easy and effective exercise to change your thinking and point of view.*

- 1-- Name and describe an issue or situation you have and can't seem to solve.
- 2-- Now turn your body around so that you are facing another direction or looking out a different window and describe the same issue but from that new point of view. See that as an alternative "truth".
- 3-- Do this three or four times, creating a different view and description of the same issue.
- 4-- Choose one of these new views that resonates best with you and adopt that new point of view as reality.
- 5-- Create a plan of action using the new view and treating it as the truth.
- 6-- Get into action. Act on the plan. You have to change your behavior in accordance with the new plan, not just talk about it. Walk the talk.
- 7--Track your results. I think you'll be surprised at how a shift in perspective changes how you act, which then changes the results that you produce. If nothing else it will demonstrate to you the power of your point of view and that you can choose any point of view that works. And of course you'll confuse the heck out of your boss or employees with your new, positive attitude and different way of thinking.

Secret #2

Don't Try to Improve. Human beings are the only animals on the planet who try to do what they are not naturally designed to do. You are not Tom Brady. Brady is a proven super star. Early on he set his mind to be a top quarterback. He created a plan to attain his goal through a rigorous physical and mental training regimen. When given an opportunity to play he performed brilliantly and has never looked back. He was prepared and ready. The rest as they say is history.

In fact, history is rife with stories about these kinds of special people. But they are special, that's why they make history. How many of us have that kind of discipline, willingness to sacrifice; to go through the pain of making ourselves better than our God-given talents would seem to warrant?

Do not try to improve

Yes, that's what I said. Don't improve on what you're not good at. Rather you need to focus on the qualities and talents that you already have shown and demonstrated to be your strengths. Simply said, your strength is your strength. There is a reason you are good at certain things and not so good at others. Your job is to be as good as possible at what you are already good at.

Most of us do not accept the fact that we have unique talents and skills. We are wise and knowledgeable in our own way. But we don't know what to do with all this ability.

Here is what to do

Concentrate on what you're good at. You can't be good at everything. OK. Discover your strengths, acknowledge the truth of it and go with what you're good at.

How do you go about discovering your strength?

I ask clients a series of questions designed to get them in touch with what turns them on, what lights them up. Often they have lost fire and desire in their life. Work is often drudgery. The goal is to do something in life that does not seem like work; then you can say "I never have to work."

Ask yourself what seems effortless and natural to you?

Most likely you are taking your own strength for granted because it is part of your natural make-up. When we can do something really well we assume it's no big deal. But it is. It's your big deal. When you find yourself doing something that you enjoy, ask yourself why. You have to actually interrupt the normal everyday flow to notice something about yourself. Ask your family and friends what you are good at or when you seem to really be on fire. They can often give you a more objective view than you have of yourself.

What does it mean to you when you are good at something? Why do you enjoy it? What is it about you that occurs to you when a specific endeavor is fun? How come it is important to you? Keep asking yourself questions.

Do what you love

You have all heard this before, but it bears repeating. A related but essential part of using your natural strength is to focus on what you truly love to do. So the question to you is: what do you love and are you willing to risk the chances that you might, or might not, make it?

Now I can hear someone out there saying something like...but I can't make a living doing the thing I love. How can I make money sailing or carving wood objects? My response is-you don't know that until you try. The universe has a strange and wonderful way of providing for you if only you are willing to step up. But you are the one that has to make the first move. One of my favorite quotes is this from the German philosopher Johann von Goethe:

"Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it."

In other words, you make the first move and then things line up. They are unexpected, unpredictable, surprising, powerful things that could never have occurred if you hadn't opened the door to them happening.

Tip #2

Be curious about yourself. Curiosity is the first rule of coaching and is one of the most powerful services a coach provides for his clients. I don't assume I know anything about a client. There is always something to discover if you stay curious. Once you lose curiosity, you lose your ability to learn and grow. Treat yourself like a fascinating stranger you just met.

Now it's time to stop and ask. What do I enjoy? What do I yearn to do? What is it about doing (Fill in the blank) that I love so much? Discover your strength now and stop improving.

Secret #3

You cannot be trusted on your own to keep your word to yourself. We all need a structure of support. You need advisors, prodders, handlers, friends, team mates, co-workers, family, support groups, etc. And you need to set it up so it is structured, not casual or informal. You need to be held accountable to keeping your word. There is nothing more powerful than the power of keeping your word. Ask someone you know how they feel after they quit smoking or lose that proverbial 10 pounds. It is empowering.

Say..."I agree to be impeccable with my word".

The simple act of consistently keeping your word will set you free. And the best way I know to keep your word is to give it to another dedicated human or two or twenty or twenty million who will hold you accountable. I say dedicated, because the person you tell has to be just as committed to your word as you. By the way, the opposite works just as powerfully. That is, fail to keep your word and it comes back to bite you every time.

So set it up in your life that you have a structure of accountability, a structure of integrity.

Make sure your friends, your spouse; your significant other, your colleagues know what promises you are making in your life. But do not expect them all to hold you to your word. Paradoxically, those who are closest to us in our lives are often not the best ones to support our integrity. That might be because they love us and want us to be happy. This is not about happiness. You can be happy if I give you a cookie. Your integrity is far more important than your happiness. Or maybe the opposite is true and they don't care enough about you to really take the time and trouble it takes to hold someone to their word. That in itself takes some work. In a nutshell I perform that task for all my clients. I ask "what are you going to do, by when, and how will I know you did it?"

I am not a friend to my clients. I may be sympathetic but I do not attempt to be friendly. The best you can say is that I am an ally and their champion. I would not be writing these words at this very moment if I didn't have that structure in my own life. I made a promise to my own accountability group that I'd write a coaching book-something I can tell you I would have less a chance of accomplishing if I just promised it to myself. Why? Because it is hard to do. It takes something to sit down in front of that infamous blank page and knock out those ideas on paper. When I gave my word out there rather than just to me, this article got written. You are now getting the value of that word-keeping.

My very integrity is at stake.

My clients pay me to ask them to keep their word.

Sounds crazy right? Why do you need someone else to help you keep your word? Because you do! That is just the way it is and as a coach if I do nothing else I hold my clients accountable to their word. Anything less and I have sold them out. That is called a structure for integrity.

Tip #3

Surround yourself with people who are committed to your success, not just your happiness. Your success depends upon your keeping your word. Ideally, hire a trained professional but if that doesn't work for you then create a structure for integrity on your own. Let people in your life know what you expect of them in supporting you in your holding yourself accountable to keep your word. It will work, as long as they know and you know that this is designed to hold you to your word and nothing less.

Secret #4

Believe. What stopped men from running a four minute mile before Roger Bannister did it for the first time? Nobody had ever been able to break the four minute mile barrier. The "experts" and the general public -you and me- said that it was impossible. Humans are more than willing to sign up for what is considered accepted belief. We like to think that we think for ourselves and come to our beliefs independently, but I hate to tell you it just ain't so. Roger Bannister broke the barrier on May 6th 1954. Was he simply a super human man? Nope, because very soon after he accomplished this feat everyone else piled on and it became commonplace to run a four minute mile. Another runner, only weeks after Bannister, ran an even faster mile and broke the record but we don't remember him because he was the second. So Bannister was just another normal human albeit he did have one quality that other runners of his time lacked.

What Bannister had more than anybody else in his era was --- Belief.

He believed that he could do it and he was not willing to let the conventional wisdom stop him. The only thing that stopped people from running the four minute mile before Bannister did it was **the belief that it couldn't be done**. And the only thing that allowed those who followed to break through their barrier was **the belief that it could be done**. So it's not the barrier that is stopping you, it is the belief behind it. Belief is either inspiring or inhibiting. Belief will send you over the top of any goal or objective you are committed to having, or stop you cold in your tracks.

Achieving Goals Requires Belief.

One thing that usually comes up as soon as you set up a goal is fear. Fear that; you can't do it, don't know how you'll get there, maybe you're not quite good enough, you fill in the blank. Fear is part of being a human and is inexorably tied in to your beliefs. Not only that, but the universe is set up to put roadblocks in your way as soon as you create a big goal.

So how do you get past your hurdle and how do you get past your beliefs? The first thing you have to do is to recognize and own the fact that you do have a belief system. That is hard to do because as I said elsewhere, we think our thoughts are the truth rather than a belief. So know that you have beliefs and they drive thoughts. Get comfortable with that.

Once you can own your beliefs you have the power to change them.

Owning your beliefs means taking responsibility and knowing that you created them. Try this little trick that trainers use. Stand up and reach with your hand as high as you can on the wall. Do that now. Is that as high as you can go? If you are like 99.5% of people you'll say that it's the highest you can go. Now reach a little higher-really, really stretch as high as you can go. I guarantee you will be able to go at least a millimeter higher. So it wasn't as high as you could go the first time was it? Same thing with Roger Bannister. He just kept saying "I can go higher", or in his case faster. It is that little millimeter that makes the difference between mediocrity and success. And it starts with believing.

I work with people to find out what their limiting beliefs are.

Once we identify the underlying belief there is usually an "aha" moment or some sort of epiphany. Now we can work from there to take ownership of the belief and see if you are willing to change it or at least observe it in action. Anytime an underlying phenomenon is observed it loses its power. An underlying belief is like a vampire. Its power lies in darkness. As coach I shine the light and the belief tries to shun the light. The light in this case is the observation of a limiting belief. The more light... the less power the belief has over you. Now you can consciously develop a new belief, one of possibility and growth for you. Given the power over your own beliefs and the choice of picking new ones, you will always create positive, forceful and fulfilling ones.

Tip #4

Look at an area where you are stuck. Now ask yourself-what do I believe about this? Be ruthless in your exploration. Where in your beliefs are you holding the position that it has to be this way? That is your limiting belief. Doing this exercise will not eliminate the belief overnight, this will take some work, but the key is to start owning and taking responsibility for having created the belief in the first place. Once you own it you can decide if you want to keep it. If you are reading this far, I'm betting you'll want to discard that belief and create a more empowering one. Do this now.

Secret #5

Trust your gut. By now you know the dot com stories of brilliant college students sitting around a dorm room in Stanford or Harvard, conjuring up the Googles, Facebooks and My Space's of the world. The idea gets scribbled down on the back of an envelope and the "next thing" is born. These ideas came out of the gut, or if you will, intuition. Sure, an idea has to be metric based and evaluated by utilizing all those good rational sense-making capabilities. But

the initial stimulus, the big bang idea itself comes from that gut place. Trust it. It knows. Your gut tells you the truth every time. In coaching we learn to put people in touch with their body because the body never lies. "How do you feel about that" ...I might ask. Feelings, what's that? Men in particular will say they have no idea what they are feeling. They are so dependent on thinking that they long ago lost touch with their feelings and more importantly their built in antennae.

Your mind is the enemy.

Not that your fine mind can't figure out some pretty impressive stuff but it is absolutely of no value in the area of change. And change is necessary for breakthrough ideas. Change allowed Roger Bannister to push past that barrier that stopped every man before him. He just trusted that he could do it. No evidence. No proof. No theorem or hypothesis. In most cases your first thought is the right one because your first thought comes from the gut.

In a lot of situations my clients tell me that they are uncertain about what to do or they just don't have an answer to a conundrum they are dealing with. Usually it is a long standing issue that they have been thinking about for quite a while. See, the answer is not in the thinking. It comes from a different source. Ever wonder why great solutions often occur after a good night's sleep or in the shower when you're not even thinking about the issue? While you and your mind are working so hard to come up with a solution, your gut is working too, trying to tell you what to do if only you'll pay attention.

What is your gut anyway?

It is that non-verbal, non-articulated, non-left brain, non-intellectual, voice. Your gut is the closest thing to your real self, the real authentic you that lies at the source of all your power. I work with clients to build up their ability to get in touch with their gut. It takes a little practice but it is worth the effort.

Tip #5

Start every day from the gut. When you wake up in the morning, check in with your gut to see what solutions have emerged overnight to the stuff you've been pondering. Go with that. When dealing with a problem, take a step away, the proverbial count to ten and do something entirely different for a brief period. That quiets the mind and lets you pay attention to your inner wisdom. Solutions happen all day when you are open to them. So, check in with your gut and most importantly, trust it. The gut knows.

Secret #6

Failure is mandatory for success.

Everyone knows this. But everyone does not follow this. The "this" is.... In order to succeed you must do one thing repeatedly no matter what. You must fail, fail, fail and fail again. Only through failure can we really learn the lessons we must learn in order to move forward.

Most of us remember how we learned to ride a bicycle. At first it's awkward and even scary. You fall and scrape your knees, ouch! There is no way to explain balance to a person who doesn't get it. They have to fall down and scrape their knees a few times.

This pattern is pretty much the same one whether we have to go to the next job or career, a new relationship or even just learn a new skill. The problem is that as we get older we like less and less to "scrape our knees." Unfortunately, this tends to hold us back from trying new things, to grow, learn and be the best you. But the only way to succeed and grow is to be willing to fail.

Get on the bike!

As a coach, I work in helping clients get "on the bicycle." I encourage, acknowledge, whisper and shout. I run along side and support them to do whatever it takes until they get to the special place called success. To finish that big project, change careers, build that dream house, grow their business or find that new person in their lives.

Tip #6

What is your dream, your vision, or goal? Are you going for it or are you unwilling to take a chance? What is stopping you right now from having what you want? The tip here is simple--Go out and fail grandly. Then watch your mental activity. The critical mind loves failure and will jump in with both feet to interject its usual poisonous patter in the face of opportunity. To counter these automatic mental reactions have a mantra ready such as "Every failure gets me closer to what I want". Do this consciously and out loud. This too lends a sense of empowerment to you as it tamps down the default mind talk and replaces it with a willful positive conversation with yourself. Stay at whatever you are trying to do until you succeed. Perseverance will pay off. Success often happens suddenly just when you least expect it. Then you can stand there and say proudly, "I did it."

Secret #7

Nobody Knows You Better Than Your Future Self.

What would it be like to have an older, wiser person to rely on for guidance and help in making choices? How about having a best friend, someone whose guidance and wisdom never seems to fail and who you trust implicitly?

Imagine how wonderful it would be if this is someone who knows you so well that they have an uncanny way of guiding you successfully along your journey no matter what the situation. And wouldn't it be great if that all-knowing all-wise person was always at your side, sort of like a genie in a lamp. But this tale I weave is no fairy tale. Such a person exists and here is the good news. You have that person naturally built into your own system.

It's called your "future self." Your future self is that imagined future that you're always striving to achieve, that perfect picture of a life you wish to live and way of being that you just know is meant for you.

In coaching, I help clients imagine their future self. They then seek guidance from their future self by asking him or her key questions or addressing troubling issues of the day. Your future self will provide the answers from a deep and authentic place inside you.

This is your idealized self telling you what you are meant to be. It is your very own built in GPS system. Like a good GPS it will give you adjustments and alterations as you go along, but ultimately you will arrive at your destination.

OK how do you get in touch with your future self? Normally this exercise is facilitated by a trained coach but it is possible to do a version of it on your own.

Tip #7

Do this exercise. * Be in a comfortable place and begin to imagine your future self. It's best to do this exercise in a quiet, safe and private place to allow your imagination to flourish. Either lie down on a mat or sit comfortably and let your imagination soar. It helps to imagine yourself on a journey to a distant land. Given the opportunity to access it we all have wonderfully creative imaginations and the facility to project the future. Keep your eyes closed and avoid distractions. Bring yourself some 15 to 20 years into the future. Get a very clear and specific picture of you in the distant future. Depending on your age, pick an arbitrary future age when you can see yourself as an older, wiser person. To get grounded in the future, ask yourself some fundamental questions such as: What do you look like, what are you wearing, where are you living, and who are you with? Specifically describe what kind of space and environment you find yourself in. Once there, you can have a conversation with this wiser being and ask your future self for advice and counseling about something you are dealing with

in your life today. Try to be completely at ease in this role play as you are both asking the question as you and then answering it as future you. Looking back from being old enough to have gained wisdom, your future self is guiding you along the way, telling you exactly who you are and where you are going. Own this future person as you. Trust him or her as if the voice of god were directing your life and live into it now. That is your future self, your best friend guiding you today.

* I want to acknowledge The Coaches Training Institute where I first learned about the future self exercise.

Secret #8

Show up when the bus hits you.

Thomas Edison once said that success is 10% inspiration and 90% perspiration. One of the simplest and most powerful secrets to success is just showing up. That means not just being there physically but being there totally. You need to do this in all areas of your life, whether it's being a parent, a spouse or a CEO of a global corporation.

No matter how inspired you are, doing the hard work makes all the difference. "Showing up" means you are responsible for everything that happens. This is especially true when you are not inspired or when you are playing victim to your circumstances. When things are going well it's easy to take the credit. But when everything is falling apart around you, then that's the time when we tend to want to blend into the woodwork. If you sit in the back of the room and grumble about lousy management or complain about how the country is being run and what a terrible marriage you have, you are not showing up 100%. You and only you are the one responsible. No matter what the circumstances are, if you show up 100% then you'll be in control of the situation, or at least your role in it.

My coaching secret is to not let clients hide out. Often we want to stay under the covers in areas where we may feel insecure. But in every encounter in your life, you are the one responsible for how it goes.

This is where the bus comes in. Let's imagine that you innocently walk out into the street and a bus runs you over. Stay with me, this is just a metaphor. I offer this outrageous example simply by way of letting you know that there is never any excuse or reason to not take responsibility for everything. Did you want the bus to hit you? No. Did you cause the bus to hit you? Well not literally, but once it did, you have two choices. You can be a victim to your circumstances and blame your bad luck, or just own the reality and be at cause in the matter. When you are at cause, you show up as the owner of your experience.

Why is it so important to be the owner? Say you go to a chain store to buy a box of 2" nails. There are no owners there, only employees. They may be polite and even provide good service, but they are just doing their job. That is called a "renter" environment. Now you go to a small, local shop for the same merchandise and deal with the owner. You are treated very differently, right? Honored for your patronage and treated like a king. That owner is showing up. He needs to be in a powerful relationship with you, even if you're just buying a box of nails. His business survival depends upon it. So does yours. Treat yourself as the owner of your job, organization, life. Try it.

Work from the outside in. A great way of showing up as an owner is to do something you would not normally do. What I mean by working from the outside in is to change your behavior first and your attitude, your inside, will follow. Often we wait to do something, holding out for inspiration or for the mood to strike. Instead, just "do it" as Nike used to say. Action is a powerful tool and experience is the best teacher

Tip #8

Be an Owner: Make a list of all the attributes and characteristics of a “renter”. Imagine a rental car, an apartment, or anything that you know is not ultimately yours. Think about who you are in relationship to that. How do you treat a rental car vs. one that you know is yours? Now make the same list of attributes and characteristics for “owner”. See the difference in how much you care, how you operate. Now choose. Would you rather go through life as a renter or an owner? Realize that you not only “own” your life but in fact everything and everyone in it. If you extend the analogy out far enough you come to the realization that you “own” the organization you work in, you own the world. What kind of world do you want to own?

Secret #9

Fear Talk.

Fear of one kind or another is the single biggest factor in stopping us from having what we want in life. I’m not referring to phobias or deep psychological issues, but rather common everyday fears. Fear of failure is the most pervasive; that is the feeling that you are not going to make it, whatever the “it” is.

Variations on the theme are fear of: rejection, humiliation, shame, embarrassment, betrayal, loss, physical pain, emotional pain, of looking bad, being stupid/dumb, incompetent, small, weak, and not being “good enough”. Surprisingly numerous people also deal with fear of success. As cited by Nelson Mandela when he quoted Marianne Williamson “Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.”

How To Deal With Fear

In order to deal effectively with fear you first have to get clear about the enormous cost of it in your life. Fear affects your self confidence and encourages self doubt. For example, fear of making a mistake can leave you emotionally paralyzed and unable to act, what we commonly call procrastination. At the same time, the opportunity to conquer fear, to break through it to achieve your goals is always available and is equally as powerful.

A good coach is trained to look at the positive side of things, the opportunities and possibilities. Sure, we might address some limiting beliefs, but for the most part we forge ahead because the fact is you are not going to get rid of fear. Fear is part of our human survival mechanism.

Google lists over 183 million hits with the word “fear” in it. So fear is here to stay. Once you know this and are determined to live with it powerfully, you can move forward.

Inspiration

Here is an inspiring story about one man’s courageous fight against one of fears allies the little voice in our head.

That perpetual voice, which has always been with us is the one that wants to keep us safely ensconced under our blanket. “Safely” is the key word, or should I say misnomer? The voice really thinks it is doing us a favor by protecting us from danger. After a while the voice is so much a part of you that you don’t even hear it anymore, except when a situation arises that allows fear to generate. The voice rears its ugly head and causes you shrink back into your cave.

How do you deal with this? For starters, listen and carefully observe the voice, but the key is not to follow it. The voice is not reality, only a habitual response. Instead, listen to Aamondt, not the voice. Who the heck is Aamondt?

"When you are injured, you treasure what you don't have," Aamondt said. "It's a good life to be an Alpine skier." This is a quote from the only Alpine skier to ever win 8 Olympic medals. Aamondt, from Norway, had come back from a potential career ending injury to once again be the best in the world in his chosen endeavor. Imagine the persistence, dedication and sheer courage it took for this man to recover, get back on skis and somehow force himself to be the best he could be, and as it turns out, the best there is.

What is the lesson for us all here? Anybody who has strapped on a pair of skis or a pair of shoes for that matter hits the metaphorical wall sooner or later. And when it happens the voice is there to remind you to quit. It can stop us from trying again. Don't let that quitting win. We all have it, (even the champion Aamondt), that recurrent little voice telling us it's over, we can't do it, were not good enough, or whatever version of nay saying your creative little devil chooses to fill your ear with. Those "wall-hitting" incidents are life's way of giving us an opportunity to find out what we are meant to be, and to choose what message we listen to.

Aamondt chose to listen to a different voice, the one that said: *"I'm not going to let that mountain win"*. He created a vision and then importantly he set about doing the necessary work to manifest it. The message here is to listen carefully to your voices, the critic and the champion, and then choose which one you are going to honor.

Tip #9

To help conquer your fear, create an internal coach, your own Aamondt. Find a picture of your own hero or inspiration and put it up on your office wall or your screen saver where you can readily see it. I have a famous shot of Einstein riding a bicycle on my wall. When asked what his motivation was for developing his theories, Einstein's response was, "I was curious to know how the world worked". So, his picture reminds me to stay open and curious and have fun at the same time.

Good luck and good listening.

Secret #10

Forgive and Forget

All the major spiritual practices in the world provide an opportunity for one to atone for their sins. We bow down before our respective maker and ask for forgiveness. Have you ever thought about the impact of forgiveness, or the lack of it, on your life and those around you? We all have heard the old saw about "forgive and forget," but I ask you to really consider its intent and relevance to your own health and vitality. Usually, when we think about forgiving we believe it's about giving up resentment towards someone else; forgetting old remembrances of hurts imposed by another. Many people carry around these negative memories towards significant people in their lives such as; their parents, ex spouses, old friends, you name it. The dictionary defines forgiving as: *"to give up resentment of or claim to requital"*. In other words, you don't get to "pay back".

But, rather than forgetting and forgiving, we often prefer to hold on to these resentments, sometimes for a lifetime, in hopes that someday, somehow we will wreak vengeance on the accused. What we don't take into consideration is the huge emotional cost rendered in holding on to these old hurts. This toll can take the form of stunted growth, constrained relationships, and a loss of strength and vitality. I get an image of a little kid holding their breath in a rage. Now imagine doing that for 20 years or so.

Holding on like that is unfortunate, but the kind of forgiving that is most important and of even greater impact on your life is the forgiving to yourself. Think back to some ignorant or

wrongful act you may have committed in the past and ask yourself if you have completely and totally forgiven yourself. Have you given forgiveness to yourself for not always keeping your word? For not quite being good enough to make the high school team? For betraying a trust in a time of weakness? Life presents an endless stream of opportunities to make mistakes and then to make ourselves wrong for doing so. If you think about it, the impact of the make-wrong lasts a lot longer than the act itself.

Chances are you haven't completely forgiven yourself. I mean completely. Whatever happened is done. So the question is; who are you paying back? In essence you are holding a grudge against yourself. Here is an opportunity to give it all up. Give it up now. You and only you have the power to choose to relinquish the hold that not forgiving yourself has on you. Give up the resentment, the indignant ill will, the holding of your breath just waiting for that triumphal fall of your enemy. Pogo said it best - we have met the enemy and he is us. The falling one is looking at you in the mirror.

Tip #10

Stand in front of a mirror and tell yourself exactly what you are angry with, what resentment or disappointment you are holding on to. Say it out loud. Any self recriminations and resentments, old baggage, whatever it is, is clogging up the machinery. Ask yourself for forgiveness. Think how you would respond to another's request of you for forgiveness? Most likely, you would graciously accept their apology and move on. Give yourself no less. Once you forgive yourself a whole new world of opportunity will open up to you. I ask you to forgive yourself now so that you can go on with the real work of giving more of yourself to you, to others... to the world.