

SESSION SIX – Homework Assignment

Allow at least an hour. Have some tissues handy. **Re-read the beginning of Chapter 12 all the way through page 160.** The most effective way to write your letter is to have your Relationship Graph and your lists of Apologies, Forgives, and Significant Emotional Statements in front of you. Look over the graph and the lists and then write your letter. Your graph and lists may contain many repetitions. It is not necessary to repeat the same recovery communications over and over. Use this letter to consolidate them into the most concise expression possible. Your letter should be primarily focused on the recovery categories, Apologies, Forgiveness, and Significant Emotional Statements.

There's no limit on how much you can write, but the emotional intensity is often lost in volume. This is your opportunity to say the most important unsaid things. Generally, two or three standard pages are sufficient. It's okay to write a little more or a little less. If you write more than five pages, you probably need to see if you are repeating the same things.

Writing the letter may or may not be an emotional experience for you. Do not be concerned if it is not emotional. Here's a helpful format for your letter:

Dear Dad (use the name or title that best represents how you remember the person),

I have been reviewing our relationship, and I have discovered some things that I want to tell you.

Dad, I apologize for....

Dad, I apologize for....

Dad, I apologize for....

(You will probably list more than three incomplete communications in this section. It is helpful to keep them grouped by category.)

Dad, I forgive (acknowledge) you for....

Dad, I forgive (acknowledge) you for....

Dad, I forgive (acknowledge) you for...

(You will probably list more than three incomplete communications in this section. It is helpful to keep them grouped by category.)

Dad, I want you to know.... (Significant emotional statement)

Dad, I want you to know.... (Significant emotional statement)

Dad, I want you to know.... (Significant emotional statement)

(You will probably list more than three incomplete communications in this section. It is helpful to keep them grouped by category.)

Important Notes:

- Any negative Significant Emotional Statement must be accompanied by a forgiveness or you will keep the pain. i.e., “Dad, I hated that you always compared me to my older brother and said I was never as good as he was. I forgive you so I can be free.”
- It’s never okay to say “You did the best you could with what you had to work with.” That comment negates all the hard work you’ve done in the forgiveness category. If you have compassion for the person you’re writing the letter to, and a desire to say so, a more appropriate statement is, “Dad, I have compassion for you and the things that happened to you in your life.” This communication should go very near the end of the letter.

Closing Your Letter

The Grief Recovery Method is about completion. In order to complete what you have discovered, you must end your letter effectively.

When you speak to a friend on the phone, you conclude the conversation with the word good-bye to signal the end of the conversation. We conclude our completion letter with good-bye to signal the end of this communication.

For the vast majority of grieving people, the most effective and accurate closing is simply: “I love you, I miss you. Good-bye Dad.”

However, you may have difficulty with “I love you” and “I miss you.” If those statements are not truthful for you, do not say them. An effective alternate is: “I have to go now, and I have to let go of the pain. Good-bye Dad.”

You can create other closing statements based on your unique relationship. What should remain constant are the very last words, “Good-bye Dad.” Failure to say them can often negate all the good work you’ve done. It is the good-bye that completes the communication. Do not substitute other words. Not saying good-bye leaves the communication open and runs the risk of leaving you incomplete.

Also, read Chapters 13-15 in the Handbook. We will discuss them next session.

Remember to take this last assignment seriously. Your recovery will be the direct result of your participation. Do not shortchange yourself.