

Clearing Past Hurts

How to let go of the past and create the life you want!

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Life is a series of experiences. Some make us feel loved, appreciated, supported, and capable. These we label as good. Those experiences we label as bad can fill us with shame, fear, anger, envy or dread, and leave us feeling depleted, defeated, abandoned, unloved, or alone. Rather than let go of negative experiences, we often distract ourselves and bury our pain. And buried pain has a way of showing up when we least expect it! Let's explore why and how we avoid making peace with our negative experiences and residual emotions, and how we can put our past hurts to rest and create the life we want.

When life is good, and when we're feeling good, we're firing on all cylinders. We make good choices for ourselves and manage our relationships and commitments. Most of us can navigate the good times without any trouble. But when the going gets tough, life can quickly devolve into a whole different story.

Numbing behaviors

When we find ourselves in rough waters, experiencing unpleasant emotions, we sometimes seek relief through numbing behaviors. Numbing behaviors come in all shapes and forms, from overworking, over-eating, or oversleeping, to over-imbibing in mind-altering substances like alcohol, or drugs, or reaching for distractions like pornography, video games, or binge watching on TV or other distractions. Some people turn to obsessive shopping, gambling, or socializing to distract and suppress unpleasant feelings when they arise.

Avoiding negative emotions

Emotions —both positive and negative ones — come on strong. Sonnets and love songs endlessly attempt to describe the euphoria of falling in love. People speak of beaming with pride as they watch their child hit a home run or graduate from college. We're all familiar with the flood of positive emotions and sensations we feel when we receive good news, like a promotion, a raise, or a new and exciting opportunity. ON the other hand,

we've all heard bad news described as 'a punch to the gut.' We've heard of people being 'frozen in fear,' in a frightening situation, or 'burning with rage,' when someone offends them or something doesn't go the way they had hoped. And we're familiar with unkind words of a friend or family member hitting us 'like a ton of bricks.'

Positive and negative emotions hit us both emotionally and physically the moment they show up. These feelings can be powerful and overwhelming. And when an experience and its accompanying emotions are negative and painful, we often try to side-step experiencing our feelings. Instead, we bury and ignore them. We engage in all manner of self-distraction as a means of avoiding negative emotions.

We feel threatened when we're uncomfortable and unwilling to sit with negative emotions. We may think we're taking care of ourselves by keeping the bad feelings at bay. But even our distractions can't keep us from eventually replaying negative experiences in our minds, and catastrophizing events to a point where we spiral into a state of anxiety and self-doubt, and find ourselves in a state of and despair and dread. It's here that we choose to numb our feelings.

Arriving at a place of negativity

Numbing may provide temporary relief, but it is neither sustainable, nor does it clear away the residue of our negative experiences.

Prolonged numbing can leave us broke, addicted, detached, and distanced from the people who care about us. We become lost and confused about life, and lose self-connection and self-esteem. This can lead to settling for less in life and limiting our potential for fulfillment and happiness.

Emotional debris

A lifetime of numbing our negative feelings and suppressing rather than processing past hurts leaves us with emotional debris. The more emotional debris we carry, the more vulnerable we are. As a clinical psychologist, I work with many patients who struggle with past hurts and negative memories that resurface, especially when they are dealing with a challenge in the present.

I call these painful memories emotional debris, and I liken pervasive negative memories that pop up from the past to boulders in a farmer's field. Like farmers who need to remove the boulders each spring before planting a new crop, we need to engage in the process of clearing up our emotional debris. If we don't, it will keep showing up and standing in the way of planting the seeds for the life we want.

Clearing and healing

Emotional debris is our unfinished business and unprocessed pain. As long as we hold onto our emotional debris, we are at risk of repeatedly reliving past hurts. When we neglect to rid ourselves of them, they continue to resurface, especially when we are most vulnerable.

We need to clear and process our residual pain to make way for our growth and happiness. We can begin by deciding to clear our emotional debris. We then need to sit with our negative emotions and allow ourselves to acknowledge and feel our feelings fully. We need to examine who we blame and the role we ourselves may have played in a painful

situation. We need to sit with uncomfortable emotions, forgive ourselves and others, and see how we have learned and grown from even the most difficult experiences in our lives.

Becoming unstuck

Once we process our pain, we are unstuck. We will still have memories, but their effect will no longer be as intense or bothersome. We can begin to see the lessons our negative experiences have taught us. We can acknowledge how far we have come, and how much we have learned and grown. We can choose to put our past hurts where they belong and can no longer hurt us — in the past. When we sit with negative emotions, we create opportunities to heal, clear, process, and evolve. We allow ourselves to begin to create a better future.

As we begin to heal, we start to deepen our trust in ourselves, to know when we need to bring in extra self-care, or to ask for help from others. As we clear our past hurts, and our healing unfolds, we begin to let go of the past and move toward a happier, more fulfilled future.

Clearing emotional debris

By cleaning and clearing the emotional debris of past hurts and negative emotions, you can make way for a happier future. Start by:

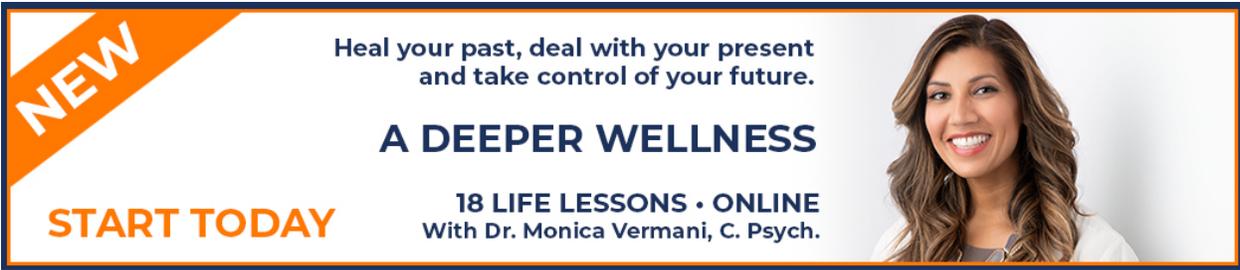
Deciding to let go of past hurts, rather than numb your emotions

Sitting with negative emotions around painful memories

Acknowledging the part you may have played in a negative situation

Forgiving and releasing yourself and others from past hurts

Bringing in self-care and help from others when you need it



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About the author

Dr. Monica Vermani is a Clinical Psychologist specializing in treating trauma, stress and mood & anxiety disorders, and the founder of Start Living Corporate Wellness. She is a well-known speaker, columnist and advocate in the field of mental health and wellness.

*Her upcoming book, *A Deeper Wellness*, will be available for pre-sales in November 2021, and her in-depth online self-help program, [A Deeper Wellness](https://www.adeeperwellness.com/), offers powerful mental health guidance, life skills, knowledge and healing, anywhere, anytime. <https://www.adeeperwellness.com/> <https://www.drmonicavermani.com/>*

