

Choosing Freedom Through the Power of Clearing

Rob Wills discovered that forgiveness is the choice for freedom and deepened his understanding of the principles of A Course in Miracles through Sandy Levey-Lunden's 'Clearing Process'.

Freedom to me is now about being relieved of emotional pain that my negative thoughts, feelings, beliefs and perceptions bring to me; to be able to truly let go of them and be at peace no matter what seems to be happening around me or to me. According to the principles of *A Course in Miracles*, forgiveness is the means of this 'letting go' and will ultimately lead its students to "the peace of God which passeth understanding." ACIM urges us to "seek not to change the world but to change our minds about it" and to look past our perceptual errors to the eternal truth, or our oneness with God, that lies beyond the illusion we believe is us. This is the choice to uproot the ego's interpretation of the world that the body's eyes show us and to look upon it with the Holy Spirit so that the seeming separation from God can be healed, "making return to God not only possible but inevitable".

A Course in Miracles outlines many ways to forgive. My experience of being in Sandy Levey-Lunden's workshops and my continued use of her simple but incredibly effective forgiveness tool, the Clearing Process (or "clearing"), which forms the basis of all her workshops, has enhanced my understanding of forgiveness by helping me to experience many of the ideas and lessons that the Course is teaching first hand.

The Clearing is a process with three stages of structured dialogue where the person clearing 'fills in the blanks' with their negative perceptions about whatever they have decided to clear on, or forgive. All stages are completed within a session where any ego thoughts, feelings and beliefs can be worked with. I have yet to see something that cannot be incorporated. This process has helped me to understand that "no one can be angry at a fact but a misinterpretation of a fact". This is because the sentence structure used is carefully construed to instil in the mind of the person clearing that they are working solely with their perceptions built up around an event or issue, and not the event or issue itself. However, the clearing process does not require the denial of such events or issues, rather the focus is upon correcting the negative perceptions that have been triggered by the event.

Through clearing I uncovered a deeply held belief that I was not good enough to be in a healthy and loving relationship, and that if I were better somehow I would have a partner. I allowed this belief to lead me in endless circles of 'self-improvement' such as trying to make my body better, earn more money and be more interesting. As a result of this belief I constantly held myself back from participating fully in my life. The clearing has allowed me to trace the origins of this belief back to the rather abrupt departure of my father when I was four or five years old. My father was very attentive and loving toward me when he was married to my mother but, during the course of one Sunday afternoon, he was gone and replaced immediately by my step-father. Soon after this my new family unit moved many miles away from him. When working with this issue in a clearing I remembered that, as a young child, I had often wondered what I had done wrong to make him go and felt that if I had been better in some way he would not have 'left'. The reality was that my father felt too hurt by the events of the divorce to be present for me in the way he wanted to be and, because of this pain, he largely detached himself from my life.

I was also able to see that from this incident that I had cultivated a deep fear of giving and receiving love. This fear made it very difficult for me to be in relationship with a partner the way that I truly wanted to be. I would find myself, even in the very early stages of a relationship, in a state of total panic that at some point I would be abandoned, much like I believed my father had abandoned me when I was a young child. This has led me to end many relationships because I felt too afraid of rejection. The clearing provided me with the opportunity to let go of that fear and the accompanying belief.

The clearing is done with a partner who creates a non-judgmental space and represents the higher truth of the person or issue being cleared on. This person acts as a guide to help the person clearing to go deeper. Sandy calls this 'holding the space'. Holding the space for another person is one of the most rewarding things I have done in my life. It has helped me to experience that when ACIM teaches that giving is receiving, it is telling the truth. In my work as a clearing facilitator, have had the experience of holding the

space for a client who is working with issues similar to my own and, as I work with them to correct their misperceptions, I am teaching myself the same lesson. I have never failed to come away feeling more connected, more loving and more peaceful after working with a client. I never feel tired!

The initial stage, which can be described as the venting of ego thoughts in a structured, perceptual way has helped me to be completely honest about my ego thoughts in the present moment. Before I encountered this work, I spent much of my time in resistance to my negative thoughts, feelings and beliefs and would attempt to deny, or 'fight' them with positive thoughts. This allowance has helped me to understand why ACIM does not ask that its students be absent of all ego thoughts, only that they be willing to surrender all of them to the Holy Spirit for help in correcting them. In order to correct these thoughts they must first be truly acknowledged without judgment. The safe and non-judgmental space of the clearing has helped me to witness my own negative thoughts with a sense of innocence. Being able to do this has helped me to dissolve strong feelings instantly, even outside of the clearing. Practicing this has helped me to observe how I would previously have had a negative thought followed immediately by a judgment on that negative thought, which only produced more negative thoughts and judgements. The cycle seemed endless.

The first person I ever cleared with I had projected onto them every person who had ever excluded or bullied me at school. This made me feel incredibly uncomfortable about opening up to them. These projections had been based solely on looks and bore no relation to this person's reality. This was where I began to experience in a profound way what ACIM teaches in its workbook lesson "I see only the past". In this way, I have learnt that the clearing is always working on past issues, even when the issue seems to be a current one.

Projections such as this are part of the healing opportunities that the workshop environment provides. I have experienced projecting onto people, in my day-to-day life, characters from my past toward whom I held negative beliefs. In the workshop setting, I have 'met' all my parent figures – my mum, dad and step-dad – which has led to insightful and healing clearings. It has been very humbling for me to realise that I saw no one as they truly are, even on the level of form – let alone beyond the form to the Truth that lies beyond appearances that ACIM teaches us constitutes our One Reality as Spirit.

I have learnt, when I am triggered by someone, to consider carefully what it is exactly that I do not like about them or what they are doing and to ask myself who this reminds me of from my past. In my case, it is almost always people and behaviours that remind me of my step-dad, whom as a child I considered aggressive and overbearing. This has helped me to see that every person is my saviour if I am prepared to see him differently. If they had not been there to trigger this negative emotion then it would have remained buried in my mind. It is a lovely feeling to discover gratitude for someone whom I believed I hated.

The latter stages of the clearing provide an opportunity to acknowledge misperceptions and ask for their correction. This is where, as a form of forgiveness, the clearing works on many levels: you see the highest truths about yourself that you can accept and understand at the time. In early clearings, for example, it can be enough to hear that you are acceptable and are capable of doing anything you want. Later on, acknowledgment of higher spiritual truths becomes possible if it was not before. Seeing your innocence in the eyes of the person holding the space is important in learning to forgive one's Self.

Although not a substitute for the study of the Course, the clearing provides a safe space where unwanted feelings can be expressed, acknowledged and then released. These are feelings that a person has often spent a lifetime denying, repressing or avoiding. The workshop environments were entirely safe and supportive spaces throughout. Sandy and her team are compassionate and adept at helping others overcome their ego stories. During the workshops, not only did I shed many layers of ego, but learnt and practiced this most insightful and healing tool, which can be used in the future for any upset: emotional, mental or physical.

Through my own practice of ACIM and the clearing, plus the experience of being immersed in this work, I have begun to realise that all events, people and places are neutral and that it is how I choose to see them that brings me happiness or pain: imprisonment or freedom.

Sandy Levey-Lunden will be teaching in the UK in November/December 2008. Sandy can be contacted at onpurpose@sandylevey.com or tel. 00 1 360 527 2796. Her website is www.sandylevey.com. Rob teaches the clearing in central London and can be contacted at rob@robwills.co.uk or tel. 07901 977 191.