

An Organic Approach: Cultivate the Authentic You™

Lesson Seven - Familiarity

"If you want something you've never had before, you've got to do something you've never done before." - Drina Reed

I've seen it with my clients time and time again. We know we want something different, yet we don't want to leave the seeming safety of what we have now, even if it's not working! That's one of the reasons it's so hard to transition from one way of being to a different way of being.

You can't get to "there," if you're unwilling to leave "here."

Another reason is that there is something that we subconsciously need about our current situation - usually not a healthy need, but a need, nonetheless.

Trying diets over and over again to lose weight that you've been unable to lose or keep off is an example of sticking with something that is familiar even though it's been unsuccessful in the past. We are afraid to try something new, like a non-diet approach because it's uncharted waters for us. We'd rather keep banging our head against the diet wall, than to open ourselves to another approach that might be more successful.

Or, more importantly, to address what our real issues are with which we're using food to cope.

Another situation I've seen with clients is the misery of a relationship that is not fulfilling. We keep hoping that the person will change, but they don't, so we try to manipulate the circumstances, which doesn't work, either. We don't want to give up hope because we've invested time and energy and love. We're not happy, but we don't want to leave because what if this is as good as it gets? What if the next guy is the same...or worse? So, many times, we stay, depriving ourselves of the love of our life.

Walking hand-in-hand with the fear of the unknown is the idea of receiving some kind of **reward** for staying with the unwanted familiar...

I ask clients what the reward is for them to stay in a situation they don't like. They usually react very strongly to this question!

"What do you mean, what is my reward for staying fat...or staying in a bad relationship...or putting up with this horrendous job...or continuing to be friends with a person who is disrespectful? I don't get any REWARD from this!"

Sure you do...or you would take steps to be in the place you say you want to be in. You may not think of it as rewards, per se, but you derive some comfort, pain relief, safety -

something - from continuing your current way of being.

My husband's smoking is a good example. He really LOVES the idea of **not** being a smoker, yet he can't seem to quit. So, he wants the new behavior, but is afraid of the things he'll be losing once he becomes a nonsmoker: He'll miss the excuse of taking a break from whatever task he's doing to light up; he'll miss the calming effect, he'll miss the "upper" effect, he'll miss relief from boredom while driving. He'll miss the partnership of his morning coffee and cigarette and the partnership of a Margarita and a cigarette, when we go out for Mexican food. So, it's not just about the nicotine - he's quit for weeks before, so the nicotine is gone from his system - it's the other things about smoking that he misses. When he quits smoking, he doesn't see it as just giving up cigarettes, he sees it as giving up so much more...a part of himself.

Another example of a morbidly obese family member with numerous health problems as a result, yet who is not inspired to do anything about it. Oh, she complains about how the weight keeps her from doing the things she wants to do, like gardening and starting a sewing business and maybe living on her own and taking care of herself. She also stayed in an abusive marriage for over 35 years. Objectively, you wonder why she's doing this to herself...and, then you look deeper. As far as the bad marriage goes, her reward was that she and the children were taken care of, so to speak - she was afraid of the unknown of being on her own with five children to feed. She hated being there, but she believed it was preferable to going it on her own and that she had no choice. As far as her weight goes - obviously the serious health issues have not been enough to inspire her to take action of any kind. The fear behind losing the weight and being in better health is that she might actually have to take responsibility for her life - she WILL be able to garden, she WILL be able to start a business or get a job, she WILL be able to take care of herself. Scary, scary stuff, when you've never done it before - this would be new territory.

There are a couple of things that can help us to break our death grip on the familiar, so that we can reach for a different experience. One is when we have enough faith and trust in ourselves and the goodness of God/Universe to take the risk to leap; and the other is when our pain finally gets bad enough that we realize that nothing can be as bad as what we have now and we decide to embrace the untapped potential of the unknown.

Questions for Pondering and/or Journaling

1. Can you think of any situation(s) in your life right now where you continue to do the same things and expect a different outcome?
2. How are you being rewarded by your current situation or behavior that you wish you could break free of?
3. What are you afraid of if you begin to behave differently? How might your life change if you change your behavior?

4. If you were to make a change, is there a fear of losing friends or family members who might disapprove?