

Homework from Caroline to the Students of Reflections Initiations by Fire, Class 1: Forgiveness

Thank you for participating in, Initiations by Fire. I hope you enjoyed the class as much as I enjoyed teaching it. I love this subject. I am sending you this follow-up email with some thoughts and my outline of the stages of the initiation journey of forgiveness. I feel it's important to be clear about this archetypal template, so I am delivering the goods to your door.

Let me remind you that the initiation experience is one that is aimed at personal transformation. That is, the wound is in service to the act of transformation. Something in you needs to be transformed. That transformation occurs through the rigorous task of breaking down – or breaking through – your own firewall.

Also, though life is this endless experience of ups and downs and feeling great and then hurt and then good and then bad, the ordinary rumbles of life – in general – are not substantial enough to animate initiation. Secondly, remember that an “initiation experience” does not announce itself in your life; it is a mystical experience that unravels itself through the fabric of everything and everyone in your life. Not until you are “transformed” do you recognize that you have shed an old form. The caterpillar does not realize that it is becoming a butterfly until it breaks free from its chrysalis.

- **The Shattering Wound:** The shattering wound is one that affects the core of your nature or inner self. This wound has its own transforming impact in that it carries the potential to weaken you, to redirect the course of your life, and to increase “dwelling in negativity”. It may occur through a singular event, such as an act of betrayal, or it could be the result of an awakening to a pattern of abuse that one has endured.
- **The Coming of Chaos:** A shattering wound has the power to change a person's life in chaotic ways. Whatever you have just experienced has shifted your life in some way. Often you are left feeling as if you are standing in a field of fragments, as you know that nothing is the same even though everything might look the same.
- **The Hamster's Wheel:** Survival time. We will create the story or narrative that helps us get through the pain of the wound. If the Princess lost the Knight, he was no good anyway. If we got the short end of the stick on some deal we wanted, our Victim will figure out a way we can live with it. If we need our Martyr or Wounded Child to help us out, now is the time that we can rely upon their story-telling skills to take something we experienced and weave it into one of their archetypal patterns in such a way that we can tell the story again and again and always come out faultless, blameless, and supported. Life on the hamster's wheel can become very comfortable. It feels like you are moving, after all, but in truth you are going nowhere. The stories of pain repeat themselves again and again and again – with no way out. The spinning eventually leads to a type of madness – not insanity – but madness of the soul. You are living in an endless wheel of illusion, just like Buddha described. The more you spin this wheel, the more you'll discover that the wheel

soon consumes more and more of your life and your energy. Enthusiasm, joy and creativity diminish and exhaustion rises along with depression. But if you listen deeply while spinning your hamster's wheel, you'll hear that ever-present intuitive voice guiding you to, "Get off now." Just get off. It's simple but it's not easy, granted. But it's the next step.

- Breakdown: People often say that they can't help themselves. Yes, you can. You absolutely can. If you can't, then who can? Getting off starts with:
 - Identify the wounded story.
 - What is the end you are fantasizing? Articulate it – get it out of your system.
 - And then step into that other person's life and imagine how he or she sees you. We may have to realize that we are – or never were – that important to someone or that other people had needs that did not include us. Or we may even have to imagine the unimaginable – which is that people were following what they thought was guidance. Mind you, I do not know your wounds. I am offering different viewpoints but each one offers an alternative view of your wound.
- Breakthrough: Pay attention to what your obstacles are, what the real boulders in the road ahead of you are. That is, is forgiveness difficult because of what someone did or said or because they did it to "you"? And are you holding on to the pain as a way of sending a message of anger and hurt, hoping that you are hurting them? (I can tell you that most of those people don't care – I mean that.) So, holding on to the wound and pain comes down to the power a wound gives a person to punish others, to be righteous in anger, to have "wound authority". These "wound privileges" are more often the hidden reasons that make forgiving so difficult. And that's why we must face ourselves. We must confront that dark appetite in us that being wounded gives us – permission to wound others righteously. Once we forgive, that power evaporates.

Initiation is the journey of awakening this profound truth in your soul: Forgiveness is the power that heals within you the desire to pass your pain on to another human being. Your heart is free from that moment on.