

Mothers Day Lesson: Facing Adversity with Resilience

Noticing the words we say to ourselves with compassionate, nonjudgmental awareness allows us to step back and look at our assumptions.

UNITED STATES, May 13, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Maya Angelou wrote an essay about the day she lost her first job at age 16. She describes the way she dressed up and landed a job at a fast food restaurant. Unfortunately, her tenure at the job was short-lived, and after a brief stint she was fired. Her mother came home to find her on her bed, crying hysterically. When her mother understood what had happened, she told Maya, "FIRED...FIRED...why Maya, fired is just a word so get your clothes on and go back out and look for another job."

Mindful Rewrite

Maya's mother was teaching her daughter the lesson that a word is just a word. Noticing the words we say to ourselves with compassionate, nonjudgmental awareness allows us to step back and look at our assumptions. Maya could not see past the word "fired." Healthy Mothering is based on unconditional love so that when failures inevitably happen the child can turn failure into growth. Using curiosity about thoughts and actions parents can help children become better instead of bitter.

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Research shows that those who deal best with stress are resilient. They do not marinate in negative words and harsh judgments. Philippe Goldin, director of the Clinically Applied Affective Neuroscience project in the Department of Psychology at Stanford University, works with people with mind-worries who cannot escape negative thoughts and emotions. His research shows that mindfulness meditation helps change the way the brain responds to



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negative thoughts. After eight weeks of mindfulness training, participants have greater activity in the brain network associated with processing information when they reflect on negative self-inflicted statements. Although they pay more attention to words they say to themselves, they report less anxiety and worry.

According to Goldin, mindfulness meditation teaches people how to handle distressing thoughts. By labeling thoughts without judgment they can step back and detach from distressing emotions. Brain scans indicate that the ability to witness thoughts without self-judgment leads to lasting positive changes in the brain.

Maya Angelou learned a mindful process from her Mother that can be summarized by the acronym NOW.

N is Notice. She was able to notice her harsh conclusions.

O is for Opportunity. Maya had an opportunity to rewrite the way she talked to herself.

W is for Within. By noticing her inner dialogue, Maya had a chance to change her thinking and subsequently her actions.

PRACTICE

Neuroscientist Wayne Drevets observes that in the brain practice makes permanent, so the more often you practice non-judgmental detachment from thoughts, the stronger the connections in your brain. However, there are benefits from as little as 10 minutes a day of mindfulness meditation, so you can start now by noticing your thoughts. Removing judgmental labels helps you take positive action.

Notice and label the times that you OVERGENERALIZE as Maya did. She saw being fired as a permanent label instead of learning experience. Our minds are often fused with the past or critical internal thoughts. You can break the spell of words.

Maya's Mother did the number of things in her response about the job loss including:

Helping her child pay attention to the kinds of things that she was saying to herself.

Pointing out the power of words to affect emotions.

Helping her learn to be resilient in the face of failure.

Showing her she did not need to be defined by one failure.

Encouraging her child to see possibilities instead of roadblocks.

Discouraging a pity party that would have left her child feeling helpless.

Teaching an acceptance that failures will happen and that you can become better instead of bitter.

Observing negative thoughts allows you to question the validity of ALL or NOTHING labels like “stupid” or “failure.” When you apply compassion, you may notice that this was how someone talked to you in the past, and that you can now chose to talk to yourself as you would a friend.

ABOUT DR. MILES

Dr. Linda Miles is a leading psychotherapist, crisis therapist, award-winning author, and relationship expert. She has studied and worked in the field of counseling psychology for over 35 years and focuses on mindfulness, stress reduction, mental health, and relationships. She has published several books on relationships and mindfulness (the latest: Change Your Story, Change Your Brain) as well as articles in the Wall Street Journal, Boston Globe, Reuters and Miami Herald, and has appeared as a guest expert on numerous national TV shows including CNN, Fox News, ABC, and NBC. You can find additional resources on Dr. Miles’ Facebook page, Mindfulness Rewrites, or at www.DrLindaMiles.com.

Dr. Linda Miles
Miles and Associates
+1 850-321-6612

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