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“Four Questions” to a Better Life

(excerpts from *The Work of Byron Katie*, 287 S. Montgomery St, Ojai, CA 93023)

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“**The Work of Byron Katie**” is transformational, because it helps us identify and question the negative thoughts that cause suffering. It is a way to find peace and to lead a better, richer life in harmony with those we love and with those with whom we interact on a daily basis. Katie, who experienced profound depression in her life, realized that what had been causing her depression was not the world around her, but what she *believed* about the world around her. In other words, it was her *negative thoughts* that were causing her depression. She developed the following *inquiry approach* to question our negative thoughts and to meet reality as it is so that we can experience freedom and joy.

1. **What is is.** We suffer when we believe a thought that argues with “what is.” When the mind is clear, what is is what we want. We can choose to stop arguing with reality by examining our thoughts. It hurts when we argue with reality, because when we argue with it, we experience tension and frustration.
2. **Staying in Your Own Business.** Katie describes three kinds of businesses in the universe: mine, yours, and God’s. She states, “Reality is God’s business, because it rules. Anything that is out of my control, your control, and anyone’s control is God’s business.” Much of our stress comes from getting into someone else’s business, i.e., “You need to lose weight.” When you go into someone else’s business, you will experience loneliness and alienation. To think that we know what is best for anyone else is to be in someone else’s business. Being mentally in your business keeps you present in your own.
3. **Meeting Your Thoughts with Understanding.** Katie states that “A thought is harmless unless we believe it. It is not our thoughts, but the attachment we have to our thoughts that causes the suffering.” If we believe a negative thought is true without examining it, we can be dragged down into a spiral of needless suffering.
4. **Putting the Mind on Paper.** Katie has developed an inquiry approach that she calls “**The Work.**” If you have an opportunity to attend a workshop presented by Katie—go! She interacts with her audience and leads everyone through *Four Questions* that will change your life and/or the lives of your counselees! You can go to www.thework.com to download a worksheet called “Judge-Your-Neighbor Worksheet” which has the four inquiry questions. She encourages you to write about someone you haven’t totally forgiven.
5. **How to Write a Worksheet.** a) Who angers, disappoints, or confuses you, and why? b) How do you want them to change? c) What is it that they should or should not do, think or feel? d) What do you need from them in order to be happy? e) What do you think of them? f) What is it that you don’t want to experience with that person?
6. **Inquiry: The Four Questions and Turnaround**
 - a. **Is it true?** (If you answered “no”, go to the third question.)
 - b. **Can you absolutely know that it is true?** (How can “no” be the right answer?)
 - c. **How do you react, what happens, when you believe that thought?** (Do you feel uneasy?)
 - d. **Who would you be without the thought?** (Wouldn’t you like to feel peace?)

Turn it around! (To do the turnaround, rewrite your statement or belief. Using an opposite statement, write it as if it were written about you.) *More on this technique in our next newsletter!*

If you or anyone in your family needs counseling for a career change or personal counseling to address losses or changes in your life, check out our web site at www.texasicounselors.com. Our rates are affordable.