

Your Release

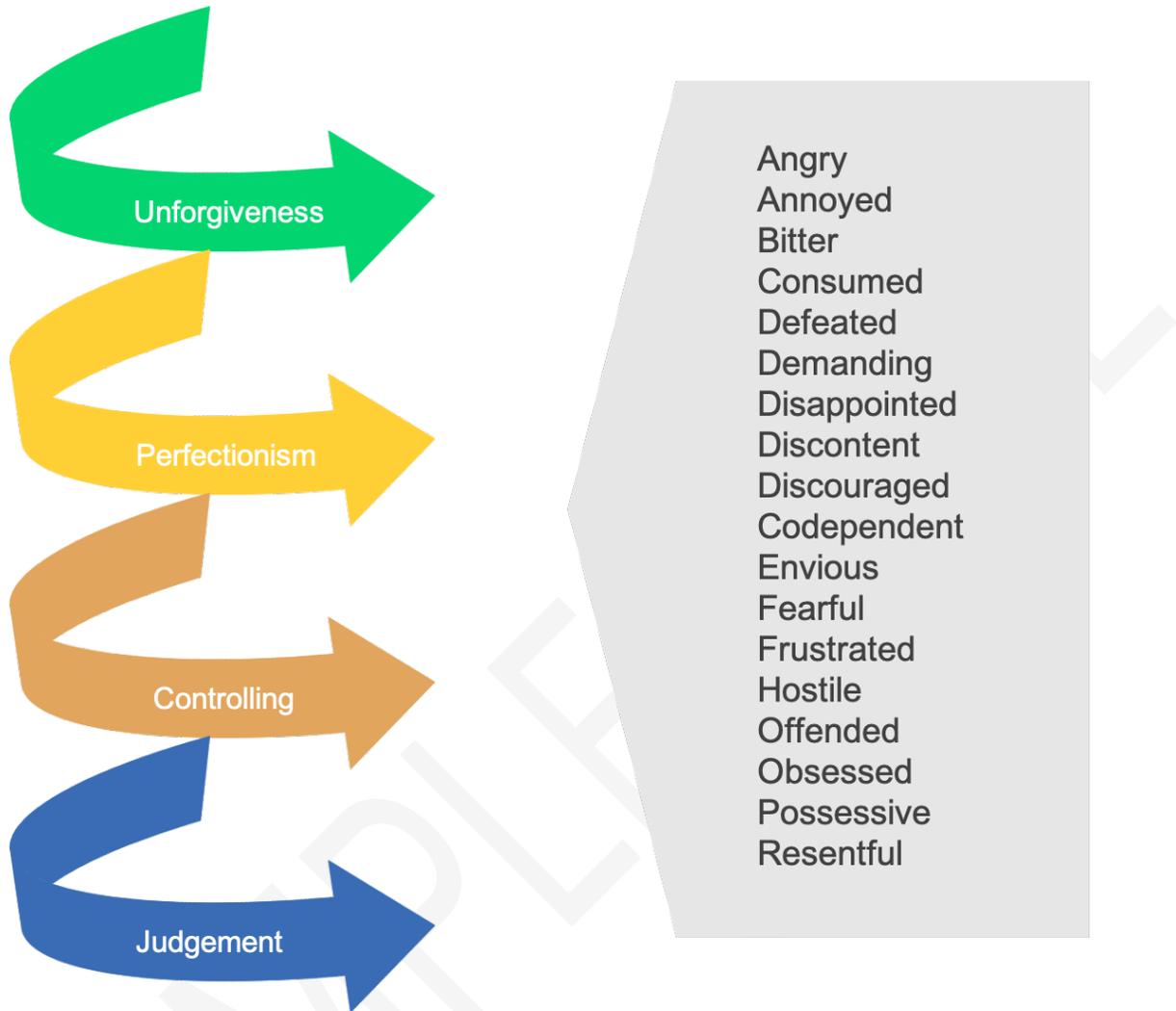
A Weapon of Hope™



Guidebook

“I Release the Illusion of Control”

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The 9 Weapons of Hope™

- Draw a line from any of the four arrows on the left to the results on the right.**

If you really get into this exercise, you will have a mess of lines going from one control point to many negative results, which is fine. The purpose is to raise your awareness as to how your control attempts are negatively impacting you.

Module 6: The Illusion of Control

- Watch “The Illusion of Control”

What You Can Control

Most of life is outside of our control - no one knows if they'll get sick, lose their jobs, when family members will die, if they'll get divorced ... you get the idea. Even after we come to this realization, we continue to try to tame the uncontrollable.



The fact that much of life is outside of our control can either scare you or compel you to release your illusion of control.

After thirteen years, I realized that my attempts at controlling Jamie's addiction and choices had never worked. It wasn't easy to face the fact that my enabling had even helped her continue to live with her addiction Beast. The painful realization I came to was that if I had the ability to save Jamie from her Beast, I would have done it long ago.

When I decided to stand up and fight for my life, it included retiring my Supermom Cape. The thing was ripped, torn, and faded, with holes everywhere. No matter, I had worn the cape during some of the most challenging years imaginable, so it felt like a part of my body, and it was painful to remove. But I kept reminding myself that it had never worked anyway. Plus, it had practically strangled me.

It can be uncomfortable for some of us to admit, even to ourselves, that we have codependent tendencies. We don't want to consider we are in a full-blown codependent relationship. If your loved one's actions and behaviors are causing you to lose your identity or obsess over that person's life, you are in danger. Codependency is like a thief, robbing you of your perspective, independence, and self-love. Had I not found a way to manage my codependency, I was in danger of completely losing myself and anyone else I cared about.

- Are you in danger of losing yourself in the actions, behaviors, or addictions of someone?**

While we can and should influence people, we absolutely cannot control them, no matter how much we try or how deeply we love them. Our control attempts might have good intentions, such as managing a loved one's addiction or behavior, but we are not that powerful.

In the video, I told a story about a friend whose husband was an alcoholic and how the counselor said to her that she was the one with the problem.

- What problems is codependency causing for you?**

I stepped away from the chaos of Jamie's life, and it was excruciating, but it was also necessary. As you know, she died, but it had nothing to do with my letting go of trying to control what I never could in the first place.

- Is it possible you need to retire your Super_____ Cape?**

If we could save someone from their Beast, we would have done it long ago.

Perfectionism

Perfectionism is another form of control. A friend told me she feels disappointed after every holiday event she hosts. On the outside looking in, that makes no sense. She has a beautiful family, loving adult children, a great husband, and a beautiful home. Nothing goes terribly wrong at her holiday gatherings, so why is she left feeling this way afterward? A desire for perfection and the unmet expectations from that impossibility.

There is nothing wrong with wanting food, decorations, or the setting to be fantastic, but perfection? That is a non-existent destination, especially if you plan on inviting imperfect people.

- Do you lean toward perfectionism?**
- Is the outcome worth the pressure you place on yourself?**
- Do you put the same standards on others?**

Module 8:

Leaving the Past Behind

- **Watch “Leaving the Past Behind”**

Listening to a funny or inspiring story from the past can be captivating. Sharing an extraordinary experience is the next best thing to being there. Remembering hardship can remind us to be more thankful. Even recalling our mistakes can help us make better choices.

Short trips to the past are okay but spending extended periods agonizing over what you could have, should have, or would have done is counter-productive to living courageously. I call them coulda, shoulda, and woulda, and after all hell broke loose, I visited them so often, they became my imaginary friends. I called them Mea Coulda, Shirley Shoulda, and I. Woulda. They were more like imaginary enemies! The four of us were trapped in the past together.

- **Are you familiar with Coulda, Shoulda & Woulda?**

- **For the next few days, see how often you think about what you coulda, shoulda, or woulda done. How about saying them? Come back and note your findings.**

Kick Coulda, Shoulda, and Woulda to the curb, so when you take a trip into the painful parts of your past, it is mainly to grab nuggets of wisdom. After all, the past is a great teacher. Go ahead and go back to gain perspective or learn from previous choices. Just be careful not to “Coulda,” “Shoulda,” and “Woulda” yourself to death. These three live in the past, and that is where they belong.

If the freedom that comes from forgiving is not enough for you, consider the impact on your health.

In a review of the research on forgiveness and health, Everett L. Worthington Jr. and Michael Scherer found that “unforgiveness seems to compromise the production of important hormones and the way our cells fight off infections.”ⁱⁱⁱ

The beautiful thing is that God has given us a pretty good roadmap when it comes to the “F Word.” He forgives us for everything. That’s right – every single big or little thing we do - or think, and I’m sure that keeps him pretty busy.

Let’s talk about two specific areas of forgiveness.

“F” Them

It’s time to unlock the power of forgiveness. When you forgive someone, you are actually helping yourself more than the other person.

No doubt, one of the people you need to forgive the most is one that hurt you the most. It is also the one you might have no intention of forgiving.

Before I understood why forgiving others is so freeing, I thought it was unfair for them to receive forgiveness when I had gotten hurt. In my view, I got pain, and they got freedom – and they never paid the price.

I discovered that the price was being paid by me more than them, and it hindered me from growth, both mentally and spiritually.

Forgiveness is not about deserving it but about freeing yourself from being the judge and jury; and harboring the burden of anger, resentment, etc.

Give Yourself a Pardon

When you forgive yourself, it will be a tremendous sense of relief. This can be tougher than anything else you've done. We don't always realize how much we are repeatedly beating ourselves up over the same things and how they have become a part of who we are.

You will repeat the exercise you did for using the "F Word" on others, but this time you will use it on yourself.

- **Write down things you are blaming yourself for – that you cannot seem to forgive.**

- **Next to each offense you listed, say out loud, "I forgive myself for _____."**

It will take repeated practice, so if this same offense comes up after you have forgiven yourself, you will need to give yourself another pardon. If it pops into your mind and you feel the urge to start flogging yourself again, repeat. "I forgive myself for _____" until the feeling subsides. Give yourself a pardon, open up the prison door, and set yourself free.

It is time to forgive everybody (including yourself) for everything. Let it all go. You are too valuable to live with the chains of unforgiveness wrapped around your neck. There is no expiration date on forgiveness, so keep at it. The important thing is to keep forgiving until you have nothing left to forgive.

Forgiveness is unlocking the door to set someone free and realizing you were the prisoner. ~ Max Lucado

- **What should you put into the *Some Things Don't Make Sense* file?**

What would be even more impactful is to make an actual file. Write down all of the things that don't make sense that you need to let go of. Pour out your feelings and then slip them in a file folder marked "Some Things Don't Make Sense." This way, you do not necessarily forget about them, but rather, place them where they belong.

- **Create an actual "Some Things Don't Make Sense" File.**

- **Stay connected** with me so you will know about podcasts, blog posts, updates on courses, events, and more.

You are not alone in this journey. It is my honor and privilege to stand with you. Your story matters, so live it courageously.



Valerie
Silveira