How You May Be Preventing Your Healing & How to Move Forward

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Hi, my name is Amy Thomas, and today what I want to focus on is ways that we hinder our healing. And I used to be a counselor for men and women who had suffered through domestic or sexual violence, and I quickly learned that there are a lot of ways that people really hinder or, you know, stop themselves from being healed, almost sabotage themselves. And I did a lot of these things myself in the different areas that I needed healing, and so those are the things that I want to focus on today with you. But before we begin, let's start with a prayer.

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Dear God, all of us have some area of our life that we need healing in, and oftentimes we are our own worst enemies and sabotage that healing from happening. And I pray today that the listeners, if they're in need of healing in some area of their life, that they take what I have to say and really take it to heart, and understand and reflect on maybe the ways that they're stopping Your blessings from flowing or from happening, and that they really look inside themselves and see the ways that they need to change, or the ways that they need to fix how they're going about trying to heal. And I pray that You're with them, and that they feel You with them, and that they reach out to You during this time that they so desperately want healing. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Okay, so there are 4 major ways that I really saw people just kind of sabotage the healing process. The first way was not talking about it. I would get people that would come into my office for counseling and they literally would not talk about anything. They would... I would try to get them to open up about things and they would be very general and very bland with their words so as not to go too deep, and I would always try to encourage them to open up. And oftentimes what they would say to me – and these are people that had suffered some deep, deep wounds – but what they would say to me is "I can't talk about this. I'm going to die if I just talk about this. It will be the end of my world."

And what I want to tell you is, is that no one in the history of the world has ever died from opening up and talking about their pain. On no coroner report does it say "Cause of death: Talking about pain. Opening up and talking about pain." You will not die from opening up and talking about your pain, but this is such a great fear, and so people keep all of this stuff bottled up inside of them. And it's so unhealthy – we just are not meant to carry all of this weight around with us. And so whatever that pain is, whatever it is for you, whether it's sexual abuse, or divorce, or anxiety, or something bad that happened to you as a kid, or, you know, a big sin that you committed that you're just afraid to talk about, whatever it is, you've got to talk about it.

Now, you don't have to go and share it with, you know, the first person on the street; you may not even want to share it with your family and friends just because sometimes those people that are closest to us have the hardest time hearing about the bad things that have happened to us or bad things that we've done. And so finding a good counselor is always encouraged. It's okay to go to counseling. Sometimes we need an objective third-party member who doesn't know us, that can listen to us and let us unleash this stuff without it personally affecting their life. A priest or a spiritual director is also somebody, or if you do have a friend that you can talk about with it I encourage you to.

The thing is, is that when we talk about our pain, the grip that it has on us is released little by little. And the way I would always describe it for those that would come and see me is: You don't have to unleash it all at once. And the way I kind of envision it is like our memories are stored in, like, boxes in our heads.

And so maybe a particularly bad thing happened to you, or several bad things happened to you. Bring one of those boxes forward, open it up, talk about it, just let it all out, close it up, put it away. The next time get out another box, open it up, unleash that pain, let it out, close it up, put it away. And you may have to get out a particular box several times, but the more we talk about things that we need to heal from, it's kind of like it dissipates from us, you know.

I know, I go around and talk a lot about all of the different things that have happened to me, and the more I talk about it the less power it has over me, and then the more healing happens. And oftentimes what happens is people that have been through the same thing will come up and talk to me, and we can relate to each other. And that offers healing because we both know what it's like to go through that thing, that particular thing, and so we can sympathize, we can empathize, and it brings about more healing. We're not meant to carry all of this weight around on our own.

So the first thing I would say is talk about it. And if it's hard to talk about it, one thing I would always suggest is: journal it out. Write it out. Sometimes it's hard for us to say the words. Journal it out, and then take that, if you are seeing a counselor, and read it to them. And sometimes that helps us get through it. But you're not going to die if you talk about what you need healing from.

The second thing is that sometimes, when something bad has happened to us and we need healing from it, and this is going to sound weird, but we almost don't really want to heal from it because we become trapped in our victimhood. And we almost use our being a victim as a crutch, and we don't really want to move on because living in this world of just perpetual victimhood allows us... gives us a lot of sympathy, which we kind of tend to like that attention, and it also kind of lets us off the hook from things in our lives.

Like "Well, I'm not really getting far in my life because I had this really bad thing happen to me, so it's really not my fault." And then it kind of takes the blame off of us, and we just... we never get past victimhood. And so there are 3 stages that we should be going through. Number 1 is recognizing that we are a victim of something, if that's what you need healing for. I have people who didn't even recognize that they needed healing from a victim of some kind of really bad thing. You have to recognize it or you can't go forward. But we shouldn't stay there. We should want to move on to surviving. Okay, we've gone through this really bad thing, whatever it is, and then we want to move into surviving. Because we don't want to just stay stuck as a victim; that doesn't define us. We want to move, we want to survive. Okay, we got through it. We may not feel completely whole again, but we're moving on into surviving.

And then we want to go to thriving, and that's: we've got our life back, we can feel joy again, we feel healed. You know, we may not always be 100% healed, but we feel at least whole enough to be thriving in our lives. And so I saw a lot of people who kind of wanted to cling on to being a victim of something, and it really just hurt them healing because they didn't want to move past that. It almost became like a security blanket for them, and we should never want to stay there. And so if this is something that you're struggling with, I would really reflect on are you wanting to stay stuck there because it brings you comfort? It kind of lets you off the hook? Or for some other reason? But we don't want to stay there, and we shouldn't ever want to just be defined by the bad things that have happened to us.

The third thing I saw was bad coping skills. And we all do this, every single one of us. Bad coping skills are what we naturally go towards, because they're instant gratification things. If we're feeling bad and we need some kind of healing, but we're feeling bad and we can't fix it right away: drugs, drinking, pornography, bad, you know, self-thoughts – "I'm a bad person. No one's ever going to want me." It kind of keeps us in, you know, we pity ourselves, it keeps us in this misery. Bad coping skills are instant gratification because we can do it right away, and then we can numb our pain, not deal with it in some way, but it just never works out. And so we need to find healthy, good coping skills.

And the thing with healthy, good coping skills is that they typically aren't instant gratification. They take a lot of work, they don't allow us to be numb, and so people don't often reach towards those. But they're absolutely necessary. If you want to heal, you've got to have some good coping skills. Things that worked for me is going on a run, exercise, getting that... burning off maybe anger or frustration of not healing, and while I'm on my run I can pray. Prayer is another great one. Journaling, turning on music that, you know, kind of speaks to your soul. I'm a huge music fan, and so music is a great way for me to cope.

And while listening to music, sometimes I just let my emotions out. It's okay to cry, it's okay to be angry, it's okay to be frustrated, and it's okay to tell God that. God is bigger than any emotion that you have and He can handle it. It's okay to tell Him that you're angry about something, or you're frustrated that you're not healing, or you don't know why this bad thing happened to you. It's okay to tell Him that. He wants you to come and tell Him that. So don't be afraid of doing those things. But find a coping skill that works for you, that is positive, it doesn't hurt you in any way, it doesn't numb your pain. It might help to lessen it for just a little while, but it should never numb our pain, because we need to deal with that, with what we need to heal from. We need to deal with it.

And the last thing I would say is it really seemed like everybody was trying to do healing on their own. And no man is an island, and I know this for sure: I could not heal on my own. And if you've watched my other videos, you know that I found healing through the sacrament of reconciliation, through a friend praying over me. My husband was a great source of healing for me, because he allowed me to talk to him about a lot of things that were hurting me. But we can't do this on own our, and so often, like, you know, I'm hurting from this really bad thing and I'm just going to stuff it inside, I'm not going to talk to anybody about it, I'm going to deal with it on my own.

I did that. I did that with especially the physically, emotional, and sexual abuse that I went through, and it does not work, it just does not work. I became very angry and bitter because I didn't have anybody to open up to, or I didn't have any positive ways to deal with the pain that I was going through, and so it just wasn't allowing healing. But all of us have friends that we can ask to pray for us. Maybe you don't want to tell them exactly what you need healing for, but they can still surely pray for you. God knows what you need prayers for. Calling on the saints is so important. There's a saint for probably every type of pain or healing that we could ever want to... that we could ever think about, and so call on their intercession.

Finding a good counsellor. So often people think of going to a counsellor as, well, you're weak. It's not weak. All of us need to talk to somebody at different times in our lives. And it's not weakness, it's actually very healthy. Just be very careful about the kind of counsellor that you choose, and make sure that they're in line with our Catholic beliefs. And opening up to, you know, a spiritual director, it can give you some great insight. If you need to heal, if you've done something yourself that you need healing from, go to the sacrament of reconciliation.

And also, I would just encourage you to spend some time with Christ in adoration. And bring your journal book, bring your prayer book, and just go to Him and let Him heal you. Let Him, you know, hear all about your worries and your troubles and your anxiety, and just know that He wants you to bring these things to Him. And it's okay to feel your emotions, it really is. But the biggest thing is, is don't try to go through this on your own. It just doesn't work, and I know it for sure. And I would just encourage you to seek out those people in your life that you know you can trust with your pain or with deep hurts. There's somebody in your life, or go find somebody that you can trust to talk about with.

So, I've really enjoyed being with you on this healing retreat, and I hope that I've given you something valuable. And you all have been in my prayers, those that have signed up for the retreat, and I hope that

you find healing in your lives. It's a journey, it doesn't happen all at once, and sometimes on our healing journey we have to go back and deal with something that we thought we already dealt with. But that's okay, it's okay. And be easy on yourself, get friends around you, call on Our Mother, call on Christ and the saints, and I wish you all well. Let's end with a prayer.

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Dear Father, I pray for all of those who are on this retreat, that they've learned something. I pray that I have been able to share helpful tips or insight with them into healing. And whatever their pain is, God, may they be reminded that You are with them in that pain, and that You want to help them on the road to healing. And we pray to Our Mother. Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.