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Healing from Our Compulsions: Learning to Kiss Our Frogs

by Mary O'Malley



Do you remember the story of the frog that was turned into a prince by a kiss? I have wonderful news. You have a frog inside of you! It is your compulsion and it has been waiting your whole life to be recognized as something much more than just a frog! It has been waiting to become your guide back to true joy and the deep peace that is your birthright.

Too good to be true? I used to think so. My frog was overeating. I once gained 97 pounds in a year! It felt like I tried every diet under the sun, every pill, shot and therapy. One time, I even went without eating for a month, only to overeat again. I thought none of this worked because I wasn't committed enough. I thought that everybody could do it but me! I would try even harder only to

spiral down into self-hate, confusion and despair. It was in the depths of my despair when, after 25 years of failure, I finally had to admit that controlling my compulsion didn't bring me the peace I so desperately longed for.

It started to dawn on me that there had to be another way. That way opened as I learned how to change my relationship to my compulsion. In all of those years of starving and bingeing, of controlling only to be controlled, my compulsion had been the enemy, something to be managed or destroyed. Never once did I think of it as a magical prince in the form of a frog who had come to heal me! Never once did I consider listening to it, learning from it, allowing it a voice in my life, a voice that could take me step by step into my healing.

So even though I didn't like this frog of my compulsion, I began to cultivate a relationship with it! I became curious. When would it show up in my life? What was my body experiencing when I became interested in being compulsive again? And what was I feeling at that moment? And lo and behold, as I learned how to be present for my compulsion and all of the feelings it was trying to take care of, I began to heal.

So how do we embrace our compulsions and see them as gifts in disguise? We explore our relationship between our reactions and our responses so we can begin accepting our compulsions. One of the core skills we explore is the ability to listen to what we are experiencing right now. Remember children's magazines that had pictures with hidden objects drawn all throughout them? How did we find those hidden objects? We searched for each and every object without ever doubting we would find them. We can learn how to do this with our compulsions and discover all of the hidden wisdom that is always there.

Is this easy in the beginning? No. This is something we are not used to doing. We live in our heads, always trying to make ourselves and our lives better or different than what they are. So we live in a subtle, but sometimes painful unease that keeps us separate from the peace and the joy that we long for. But we can dismantle this world of unease and if we listen, compulsions will show us how to do this. Is this the quick way to our healing? No. But like the story of the tortoise and the hare, we need to give up a little speed and control in exchange for the compassion that

allows us to again be comfortable in our own skins paving way for an inner peace that never leaves us.

You too can kiss the frog of your compulsion and turn it into a prince. Be willing to ask yourself a number of times a day, "In this moment, what am I experiencing? And simply experience what you are experiencing - water trickling down your back in the shower, the softness of your sheets, the music of a bird, the warmth and richness of a latte, a fiery mouth from spicy foods. Now this may not seem like such a big deal. But every time you are willing to experience what you are experiencing, you are turning toward yourself rather than away. And slowly, as you strengthen the muscle of your awareness, you can learn how to be present for your compulsion, dissolving through it through the light of your compassionate attention.

Mary O'Malley is a speaker, group facilitator and counselor in private practice in Kirkland, Washington for over 30 years. Visit her website at www.maryomalley.com. This article is based on her book "The Gift of Compulsion: A Revolutionary Approach to Self-Acceptance & Healing" (New World Library; 2004; \$14.95). To order the book, call 1-800-972-6657 Ext. 52 or visit: www.newworldlibrary.com for more info.

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