

## 1 THE DILEMA

Richard, a successful man in his late thirties, was on his way out West following the breakup of another marriage when he called early one morning. "I just finished reading the book, *The Celestine Prophecy* by James Redfield. The friend who gave it to me told me about your work and suggested I give you a call when I got to Springfield. He said you might have some answers for me and help me make sense of things. I don't know, maybe it's a waste of time for us to meet, but my life is a mess . . . and I'm desperate."

Springfield is an hour-and-a-half drive northwest of Heartland, where we do our intensive workshops. I had a few days between finishing our summer season and leaving to go on tour, so I invited Richard to meet with me later that morning. He agreed.

It was a clear, crisp day and the leaves were taking on fall colors. As I watched him climb from his car, Richard appeared taller than I had imagined. He was wearing jeans and a navy blazer over a faded blue tee-shirt, and running shoes instead of the mountain boots I had expected for someone traveling to the West. He appeared as if he could fit in anywhere and be at home with almost anyone. His face showed intelligence and sensitivity, but carried obvious traces of sadness; the slump of his shoulders indicated what appeared to be sizable emotional burdens.

His tales of broken relationships and marriages started before we had even settled into the house. Typical of many of us before we finally look for alternatives to the way we've been taught to live, Richard expressed frustration, anger and fear. He seemed to flounder in his pain, using words I have come to know are born in the abuse we visit upon ourselves and others when we blame them.

There was an uncertainty in his voice and what seemed to be a controlled anger bordering on violence. I interpreted this to be a product of tremendous frustration and feeling out of control, issues I encounter often among the individuals with whom I work.

**KEY THOUGHT**—Violence is an attempt to control. The more insecure or out of control people feel, the more violent will be their thoughts, words and actions.

He finished his story and lamented, "Sometimes I feel so hopeless, I wonder if there really are any answers." He looked at me now, deep in his pain, waiting for a response.

"Sounds like things are pretty tough for you right now," I began. "How about taking a deep breath and just being still for a moment? Fortunately, these things pass. We have some powerful tools to assist in speeding up the process and assuring a future that unfolds more easily and peacefully. Has anything like this ever happened to you before? Have you ever felt any of these feelings previously?"

Richard admitted that many times he had experienced these same feelings of rage, and he went on to describe the circumstances surrounding several relationships that had ended abruptly. He related his belief that no matter what he did or how he acted, relationships and life were hopeless. He explained that he was moving again to escape painful

memories that haunted him in each city that had been his home. Clearly, he felt victimized, alone and confused about how his life was going.

His dilemma was not knowing what to do; he was afraid of repeating his mistakes. This prevented him from making real choices. At the same time, he was defensive about his past having anything to do with the present. He made it perfectly clear that he wanted only to talk about what was going on in his life now, not something that happened years earlier.

"I suggest you notice, Richard, that each 'situation' in your life has one thing in common; every time 'it' happens, you are there! You are the common factor. You play a part, consciously or unconsciously, in every event in your life."

"Are you telling me I wanted those things to happen to me?" Richard sputtered.

"Wanted, no! Participated in, yes! When you can see and take responsibility for your part in events, things will change. Responsibility is not a weight to carry, but a key to reclaiming your power."

"R-i-g-h-t!" he shot back, crossing his arms as he spoke. "So, everything is my fault and if I just accept blame, and admit that I'm guilty, then everything will be fine. Is that your point? I'm not to blame! If you want to blame somebody, blame them! I've been the victim too many times, and I'm not going to let it happen again!" His teeth were clenched and his shoulders rigid as he glared at me through unblinking eyes.

"If his mind is as closed as his body language suggests, my work is definitely cut out for me," I thought. "Looks like maybe you are closing up, Richard. Take a breath; I'm here to support you. My words were 'take responsibility,' not 'you are to blame!' This work is about releasing guilt and blame by seeing our own patterns and then healing what is in us that sets up those patterns. My goal is to assist you in recognizing, dealing responsibly with and undoing your part in each painful situation in your life, and learning how to do things differently!"

"Blame is an escape from responsibility and a way to give away your power. If what happens in your life is everybody else's fault, then why is it you are the one who has been there every time?" I asked as gently as I could. "If they are the ones with the problems, why are you the one with the pain?"

The issue that had Richard feeling so much pain was his Why Is This Happening To Me . . . AGAIN?! question, which so many of us ask repeatedly as we go through life. It does not matter what the actual event in the outside world is; it could be any combination of relationship issues, employment problems, financial difficulties, or any number of other possibilities. No matter what the circumstances, there is always one common factor: The person having the experience is always involved!

**KEY THOUGHT**—Blame is a way to give away your power and pretend someone else is at fault.