

CHAPTER 33

LOVE AND LET GO

BY CLAUDEL E. KUEK

THE KEY TO LIVING IN PEACE

It was not always this way for me. I was the first-born in a strict family where obedience, discipline and constant drive toward excellence were the core of our daily lives. I grew up under close scrutiny and a relentless pressure to dive, nose in to every deep end, and swim to achieve every goal. Indeed, this visual image of being pushed without warning to swim without aid across the pool at my first swim lesson remains seared in my memory.

From as far back as I can remember, all I wanted was to break free from my parents' strong hold and any form of authority surrounding me, and to be free to live a life by my own terms.

My parents are wonderful and loving, albeit strict and controlling. Yet, they had a way about them which rubbed off on me and my siblings as we were a close knit family. They were highly strung and often emotionally volatile. I picked these up from an early age, and deemed that it was quite alright to be temperamental and transparent about one's emotions. I was impatient with anything that stood in the way of my progress, and learned that the way to deal with setbacks was to show rage.

God bless my parents who are today separated by choice and living happier lives for it. I would not change them for anything in the world. However, because of their profound influence during my formative years, I have had to constantly work on my limiting beliefs, my persistent need

to charge into projects at break-neck speed, my inability to trust and to relax.

Who I am Today

As I am writing this, I am a very different person from who I used to be. It has been a long, winding walk to get to this place where I have always wanted to be: calm, balanced, happy and relaxed.

In the early years after stepping out from the shadow of my parents, and to realize my passion for learning and for dance, I put myself through college overseas, leaving home against my parents' wishes. I had been an accomplished ballerina as a child, and continued dancing there to capture hearts and fulfil my need to excel. At the same time, I worked with great fortitude and stamina to accomplish as much as I could in the shortest time possible, anxious about my limited study funds running out. It seemed like a constant race to reach my destination, and I was immensely pleased to graduate magna cum laude.

Today I have evolved to become the person I am proud to be: happily married, deeply connected to the most inspiring persons in my life - my children, founder and director of award-winning Pilates studios in Singapore - PowerMoves, leading in the community as a success coach for aspiring youths, and at peace with the choices I have made and the contributions I am able to make.

How do I know life?

We know with great certainty that life really is a journey to be savored and cherished. The many moments, both good and bad, all come and go in a flash. The frivolity of time that we think we have plenty of fades into scarcity before we realize. Inconveniences that make our blood pressure go up too often fall away into one last heartbeat. I should have understood right from the start that we really ought to be abstracting the most out of the every breath we take, every dream we contemplate, and every thought we formulate.

I am now more mindful about the race of life, and not to be forced into a pace that will leave me panting and breathless, the way it was for me growing up. Now that I am in my mid-50s, what I know to be most precious is to have more of time to share with the people I love and to

make a real difference in my corner of the world. I want more of life. I want more of everything that is important to having more of life.

Why it has to be Love

Love is what it is. Inasmuch as you understand the meaning of love, it is accurate to say that the most compelling reason for our existence is to love. When we give ourselves up to loving everything before us, we will more clearly understand its meaning and that of life. To stretch time out, live a little longer, and live a little better - we just all need to do a lot more loving.

*Owe no one anything, except to love each other,
for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.*

~ Romans 13:8

- Love the home that you live in, love the food that nourishes your body.
- Love the reason you awake every morning, love the day for turning into night.
- Love your parents for they tried, love your children for they only want to make you proud.
- Love your neighbor for sharing in your space less lonely, love your colleague for making your race more worthy.
- Love the traffic for its buzz, love the weather for its mystery.
- Love the government for its structure, love the economy for its challenge.
- Love what you do as a reflection of independence, love who you married as a gift from your Creator.
- Love who you are as a triumph of your spirit, love who you can be as you work towards your goals.

When we surround ourselves with the emotion of love, we are wrapped in an abundance of gratitude which in turn helps to center us toward an inner peace and calm. This attribute will bring forth a life more forgiving, more beautiful and more in touch with your higher purpose.

The secret to achieving any level of quietude and peace lies in the art of letting go.

Let Go of the Past

There is beauty and wisdom in all things past - your accomplishments, your triumphs, all your wow-was-that-really-me moments. There may also lie, in your past, regrets, pain of events gone wrong, and all the I-should-have-known-better moments. Would life not be as colorful without these layers of good and bad that represent a life well lived? Everything happens for a reason and it helps make us who we are. Be thankful for all the opportunities, for better or for worse, as we had the time and we had our chances. But yesterday is gone. There is nothing more we need to do about yesterday for we cannot bring it back.

Our purpose for today is to be our best self and we can only do this when we let go completely of the past. Focus on the now, do something special for yourself and for those around you, keep abreast with your renewal and continual growth. Release the attachment to all things past. For today is your time and your gift to yourself. Do not let anybody else own it but you.

Let Go of the Future

The future is beyond our control as it is yet unborn. How so very unexciting it would be if we all knew exactly what the future holds. Without an uncertain future, we might not need to strive further or stretch ourselves ever again. The beauty about the future is its element of surprise and the opportunity to do it differently. The lessons of hindsight take us forward and help us create a future that seems less unfamiliar. However, whatever happens in the future cannot be predicted nor guaranteed. Lying awake worrying about the unknown, playing out the fears and imagining the worst possible scenarios is not keeping the future in the future. The best way to embrace the future is to leave it there in the future as you live in and experience the present.

Today is our gift and it will last for only 24 hours; don't use it spending any time in the past or in the future. Be open to the wonder and magic of every surprise that the future holds for you. Stay strong and steadfast about making today your best possible creation and keep those future calls in the future where they belong.

Let Go of what You Cannot Control

It seems so very obvious – why would we ever obsess over something we have little or no control over? Whether it be dwelling over the outcome of an event or the response of a loved one, it is rationally futile even before we begin exploring the options. But indeed we will always be tempted to try. The trying is what will cause us to feel a loss of control and an increase of overwhelm, over an outcome that we never had control over anyway. We cannot control everything that takes place, but we can control how we look at it and how we choose to respond to it. We can control what action steps we will take in the direction of an outcome we so desire. We can become more mindful of what is really in our present and focus on whatever it is we do have the power over.

In learning to let go of everything we have no control over, we must remain grounded in the thoughts we hold of the present moment. Stay aware of the positive in the situation, keep breathing into the moment, focus on your strengths and let go of all else.

Love and Let Go

All the art of living lies in a fine mingling of letting go and holding on.
~ Henry Havelock Ellis

In all my time reaching for the stars, what I was truly searching for was my freedom. The freedom to love as I please, to love everything that pleased me, and the freedom to be able to let go of all things holding me back from being the best version of myself. At the point when I could let go and just be thankful for who it is I am really meant to be, I found peace. Letting go is pre-requisite of healing, of achieving, and of being free.

I count myself lucky to be standing here at mid-life understanding that I can finally stop trying to figure everything out. All we need in our hearts is love and even more love. Love yourself, love the others, love the process, love this wonderful life that belongs to you. Be grateful for another new day to be alive. It is not about being perfect in every moment; it is about having fun, staying cheerful and being real. Enjoy every moment with your loved ones; cherish every hug, accept every compliment, and seize every opportunity to make someone else smile.

In learning to love freely and let go unabashedly, therein you will find peace.

To just Be

Believe in yourself. Believe in your purpose. Believe that the universe is unfolding as it should and that your role is to go with the flow and find your rhythm in the now. In holding on too tightly to the past or the future, or the inconsequential thoughts, this could in fact be holding you back from the big-picture purpose and vision of who you are meant to be.

Be flexible while staying true; allow the pathways to unfold as it will, opening you up to courage and surprise, spontaneity and opportunities. Flex and flow with the current of your life. Be grateful for everything. Be strongly focused on the every moment of now. Remind yourself that this very moment in time is the only one you know you have for sure. Let love be your guide. Remember to breathe.

Learn to love and let go, and just be you. Therein you will find beauty in every moment and one day soon, a complete peace of mind.

It was the mantra of ‘live and let live’ that held us toward the greater understanding of how this world belonged to us all equally, and with the hope that we could all find peace and happiness in. For me, it has evolved to ‘love and let go’ – *this is my key to living in peace.*



About Claudel

Claudel E. Kuek believes that “our greatest wealth is our health”. On the strength of that conviction, she founded PowerMoves Pilates-in-the-Park with its first studio in the healing serenity and soothing ambience of the city central park in 2006. Over the next 12 years, PowerMoves went on to start up other branches across the country, each housed within a distinctive lifestyle destination surrounded by fine gourmet restaurants, art shops, specialist medical clinics, and nature.

An accomplished ballerina formerly with the UK Royal Academy of Dance and a professionally-certified Pilates trainer, Claudel’s founding philosophy was a heartfelt desire to endow and empower individuals with “a rhythm and confidence that transcends mere exercise and becomes a way of life.” Not unlike ballet, the visible benefits of Pilates are manifested as a combination of energy and elegance that can be perceived even in the way a person moves. Her passion led to PowerMoves becoming a renowned fitness and wellness brand in the country. Her multi-award-winning studios have gained numerous accolades, such as “Most Beautiful Studios in the World” by *Balanced Body Inc.*, “Best Pilates Classes” by *SHAPE* magazine, “Best of Singapore” by *Tatler* magazine; and scoring first place over multiple years consecutively for Most Outstanding Service Quality in the sports and recreation arenas.

Claudel holds a Bachelor of Science, *magna cum laude*, degree in International Business and Marketing from Hawaii Pacific University. From 2007 to 2010, she also held the position of President of the military officers’ wives club – responsible for the welfare and social interactions of the wives of military personnel. She has an avid interest in Interior Design and is lauded for her work in features with *Harper’s Bazaar*, *Tatler* and *Prestige*.

At 53 today with two grown-up children, Claudel is a role model for working women and mothers everywhere. She is a Jack Canfield trainer (creator of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series), and is developing a Success Coaching enterprise to help aspiring youths and women discover a new capacity and confidence that is founded from fitness and wellness of the mind, body and soul.