

## **QUESTION: Why is “Letting Go” Important?**

Letting go is an ongoing theme in our life. Not one of us can escape letting go, if we are going to lead a psychologically healthy life. From birth to death, we continually face the task of letting go, whether it is letting go of something physical such as our mother’s womb, the house we grew up in, a relationship, or a behavior, belief, identity, or role of some kind. Letting go is what we have to do in order to grow and mature psychologically.

We’ve all felt some pain, at some point, of letting go---whether it be a favorite old sweatshirt, a gift you’ve never used but can’t bear to throw out, or every drawing or draft your child made in grade school! When we hang on to being a victim, clinging onto old hurts and resentments, or obsessing, we are not letting go of the past. How we have responded to losses in our life has shaped a good part of who we are when we face the next challenge of letting go.

It is during our midlife years and beyond when letting go can become a big issue for many of us. Mother Nature designed midlife as a time of emptying, yet we work hard holding on to things and images and lifestyles that represent our youthfulness. We do not WANT to let go of these. As a result, we become stuck in the past and stunt our psychological growth.

By design, letting go moves us forward; holding on keeps us stuck. [The book, *Necessary Losses*, by Judith Virost, is a book that takes us through every kind of natural loss and letting go challenge we are likely to face from birth through death. I highly recommend it.] It has been said that “The art of living lies in a fine co-mingling of letting go and holding on.”