In my memoir, Strand of Pearls, I describe the moment that broke my spirit. When I was two years old, I broke my mom's pearl necklace. It was the first time my father beat my little hands purple. I begged him to stop through my terrified eyes as tears of pain rolled down my innocent face. That day I broke as well. I was the broken strand and the pearls are my life lessons. It took a life time of synchronistic events for the Universe to prepare me to find peace within myself and repair my strand. One of my sparkling lessons after self-realization, that I was able to string on my strand was forgiveness but it didn’t happen until I endured 16 years of abuse and decades of self-destruction, tragedy and addiction. I suffered for decades in the darkness.  
  
My message is based on personal experience and I believe that the essence of life is a graceful balancing practice of polarities using the natural state we are all born with inside of us, peace. For every life challenge there is a lesson. Without darkness we wouldn't know or be grateful for light. For every negative there IS a positive. For every sorry there is happiness. For every hurt there is healing and for every ego there is a heart. They key is to be open minded and open hearted enough to acknowledge these as the seeds with. We then cultivate them into luminous pearls of lessons and knowledge that shine uniquely and individually but all are connected on our strand of life.  
  
While in the darkness of life challenges, sometimes it may seem impossible to ever see the light of hope and faith and we seek relief outside of ourselves and even find numbness in a chemical, drug, alcohol etc. but if we embrace these moments and the emotions that accompany them instead of resisting, the sun will shine again. There is peace within us all waiting to be unveiled. When send the dark clouds of processed emotions away that seem like the never ending storm, ultimately unlocking the luminous infinite treasures within our soul, we are finally able to live through our hearts and not our ego.  
  
One of many treasures I was ever so blessed to discover within myself was/is the ability to accept. For many years, I was completely paralyzed to the thought of accepting life on life's terms or other people for who they were. After years of suffering and turning to a destructive live and alcohol, today, after having a spiritual transformation and discovering and uncovering my heart and soul from under many layers of armor and releasing my ego from and it's duty of protecting me, "letting go," I am able to accept. Acceptance doesn't mean we have to like what we are accepting; it allows us to stop resisting. Living through my ego and fear were my enemies. Facing our pain and emotions are our friends. Tears are little magnifying glasses to our inner most truths of our heart and soul.

Today living through my heart and going with the flow of life instead of trying to control it is what enables me to cultivate the pearls compassion and love and most important forgiveness. Forgiveness releases us from ourselves and others from limitations. It also enables us and those who we have forgiven to learn and grow from the lesson in the act of the forgiveness. Some of us view forgiveness as a weakness of defeat, losing, or giving in. In actuality, forgiveness is a pearl we find within us. It’s strength! Forgiveness is to abandon from judgments and fears of others and life, making space for positive attributes of peace and love and our own light within.  
  
In my memoir Strand of Pearls, I have weaved my internal reactions to the experiences of my life's adversities, varying from abuse, loss, tragedy and addiction with the thematic flow of pearls of life lessons and challenges. The following passage from my memoir is a declaration of forgiveness to my parents. "Today Mom has labeled herself an unfit mother for allowing those beatings to happen. When I was a child, I blamed her for not saving me. I’ve assured her that I no longer blame her. Forgiveness softens us and others. Now that I am an adult, I understand the position Mom was in. I don’t even blame my dad, because he was sick and didn’t know how to recover. I forgave him and have compassion for him."   
  
Forgiving is not always an easy act to follow through with but it is a form of healing oneself and extending a hand to help others heal as well. By forgiving my mother for circumstances out of her control it has enabled us both to heal and love. My father passed when I was 23 and it took me almost as many years to forgive him. The forgiveness of his abuse has released me from his control that he once had over me physically and for years mentally and emotionally. My body, mind and soul are now free and living in peace and love.