

Wounds in the Way

by Karen D. Bradley



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Not everyone can endure the pains of life and allow their light to continue to shine bright. There are people who've had incidents that have changed them and held them back. The darkness found a way to creep into their hearts and hardened it to the point they've assimilated the negative effects of the wounds as part of who they were. They can't always see how this process has stunted their growth.

Tyler, the main character in *Love Runs Deep*, had wounds which caused her to be guarded to order to survive. Thinking about how Tyler's wounds got in her way in the book, I decided to host a “Wounds in the Way” panel discussion for the book release instead of the common type of launch event. The panel was to explore and discuss the effects of grief and past wounds on relationship, healing from the past, turning wounds into wisdom, learning to love again, and maintaining a good relationship in the mist of drama and chaos.

Everyone wears their wounds differently. My hope was to give the audience a variety of perspectives based on individuals' different life experiences. The panel included authors, Jenetta M. Bradley, Yasmine Brown and Larry Miller as well as Internet Radio host, Dave Maxx. Each person had a topic to discuss. The audience contributed their personal experiences to the mix and made it a great discussion. Every opinion wasn't agreed with, but each fed into a deeper conversation. I can't get into everyone's point of view from that day. Instead, I will share how I dealt with the wounds of being betrayed, their effects on my life, and the lessons I learned.

The longer we allow our wounds to be in our way, the more damage they will do in our lives. I had packed my pain in a box, placed it in the back of the closet, then closed and locked the door. Every day I visited the closet by remembering all the pain and disappointment. I parked my life in front of that locked closet door, dwelling on things I couldn't

change. I had no clue at the time that my wounds had shattered me into pieces like a glass vase hitting concrete. It caused me to encase myself, and my broken pieces, in a bubble. I claimed to be okay. I wasn't. I had fallen prey to my wounds; building walls are around my heart and life; refusing to accept any new people into my life. I became excellent at deflecting and managed to share the bare minimum about myself with others.

Until I acknowledge the wounds, I couldn't honestly assess the damage they had done to my life. They had made me a guarded pessimist with trust issues, but that was only the tip of the iceberg. My wounds had damaged my perception of who I was and altered my life goals. I went through a period where I was giving people the worst of me before they were allowed near the best of me. I wasn't trying to be nice and wasn't trying to be optimistic. Neither had served me well and I was having none of it.

The decision not to give people another opportunity to abuse my kindness was made early on. Uncaring, blunt and not trying to be sensitive to people's feeling anymore became my new way of being which was the opposite of my true personality. I knowingly self-sabotaged career opportunities and relationships. I allowed my wounds to keep me half-stepping around and avoiding experiences that would benefit me. I was perfectly content with staying under the radar and in the role of a loner.

Healing from our wounds cannot exist if we are in denial that they exist. Even when I recognized them and accepted the negative influence they had on my life, I had to actively decide—push myself—to do something different. Initiating change was not easy. Even when the world was falling apart around me, there weren't too many people I would open up to and tell. Attempting to be less guarded brought on a series of missteps and mistakes. The process of changing my ways healed old wounds and opened

my life to new possibilities, but it also created new wounds.

We live in a world that says we need to have a mindset of no regrets. I have plenty of them. It hurt me deeply when someone who betrayed my trust uttered the words “no regrets” as it spoke to that person being oblivious to the pain they had caused. Regrets are only a bad thing when we allow them to hold us back. They can assist in the prevention of repeating mistakes and teach us how to handle certain circumstances better. If we refuse to acknowledge that experience, then we can't turn it into a tool to make our lives better.

When we use those mistakes to improve our lives, we can get to a point where we can't look back on the certain incidents and associate them with the word regret. I regret not being a better communicator with people who were good to me. I took for granted they knew that I appreciated their contribution to my life. Even when they do know, sometimes they still need to hear it every once in a while. I can't say sorry to the people who are no longer in my life. However, I can make a conscience effort to do better with others in the future.

We have all made mistakes. We have to learn to stop kicking ourselves in the behind, forgive ourselves and find the courage to move beyond it. We can't get stuck in the cycle of blame. We definitely can't take the blame for circumstances that were out of our control. Our situation needs to be assessed to figure out what is the next step to get our lives back on track.

Sometimes instead of doing an overhaul, I attempted cosmetic changes. It caused me to sabotage great opportunities and take a new route to the same mistake. I couldn't accept new blessings when my hands were full of old issues I should have let go.

Our wounds can cause us to be a house divided. If we

don't deal with them, we will fall. Our peace of mind suffers. Our relationships suffer. Our lives suffer because our hearts, minds, and souls are divided by the wounds in our way. We put up so many defense mechanisms that restrict the flow of our lives.

A bubble was created around my life to keep out the pain, but it also kept out blessings. My movements were in fear instead of faith and courage. I was consumed with protecting myself. As I crossed paths with others like me, I began to understand when we are not moving in our purpose due to our issues, we are also blocking someone's blessing. We are sitting on someone's inspiration. We are holding our destiny and gifts hostage because our wounds won't let us move forward.

We can't live life without incurring wounds. They will either make us bitter or make us better. They will either grow us up or stall us. They will either weaken or strengthen us. They will either break us down or build us up. We are the deciding factor on how these occurrences past, present, and future will affect us. I am hoping that those who have wounds in their way are granted the strength, courage, and faith to move past them.

The journey to work through the wounds won't be easy but it will be worth it. We have to trust that circumstances that once scarred us will become a testimony that empowers, inspires and strengthens our lives.

Karen D. Bradley, a Chicago native, is the author, Shattered Illusions, Life on Fire, Love Runs Deep and Tainted Love. She co-authored novel a with her sister, Jenetta M. Bradley, and is working on her next novel. Visit her on the web at www.ambrosiasands.com