



Forgiveness: Myths, Process and How to Start

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The weight of anger, resentment, bitterness and/or holding onto pain can, not only slow us down physically through developing various health conditions, but psychologically impact our ability view life optimistically. Preventing us from being productive, feeling energized and satisfied with life.

Forgiveness often gets confused with letting the person who we feel treated us unfairly as “getting off the hook” or that we need to prove we forgave by re-establishing the same relationship with the individual. Turning these myths or misunderstandings into our belief system can create a barrier to genuinely forgiving.

“Forgiveness is for the person doing the forgiveness”, we hear it and roll our eyes because it certainly does not always feel that way during the process. Perhaps, implementing the process below and the suggested strategies which follow may help you or someone you know.

Stages of forgiveness

1. Solidifying

Taking time to find ways to keep yourself stable and grounded regarding revisiting the experience internally. Ensuring this as your first step will support you as you move through the other stages of forgiveness (more of how to achieve this below).

2. Uncovering

Gaining insight into whether, and how, the injustice and subsequent injury have compromised your life. Confronting the secondary emotion of anger and becoming aware of potential emotional exhaustion. This is when you notice the cognitive preoccupation regarding the situation and/or the people involved. Awareness that this could be a permanent change for you.

3. Decision

Gaining an accurate understanding of what forgiveness is, and making a decision to commit to forgiving on the basis of this understanding. Understanding this does not mean we condone the act, nor does it mean we need to have reconciliation with the person/people.

4. Work

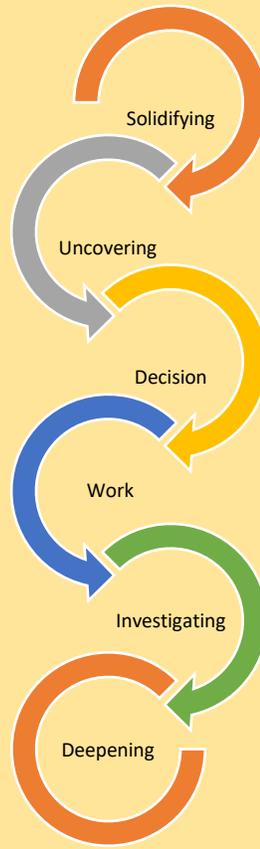
Gaining a deeper understanding of the offender and beginning to view the offender in a new light (reframing), resulting in positive change in affect about the offender, about the self, and about the relationship. Showing empathy and compassion (understanding that they may not deserve this compassion, but also realizing this is not about the other person/people, this is for you. Bearing the pain involved in change. Giving the moral gift of forgiveness.

5. Investigating

Reflecting on how far you have come and acknowledging what you have peeled away is an important part of your healing journey. Healing and forgiving occur simultaneously and dedicating a moment when you acknowledge this is a way to celebrate your win of getting this far. We have been conditioned to not focus on our strengths and accomplishments, create a safe space in your forgiveness journey to reduce the limitation we can create in our minds regarding how brave we are to have come this far.

6. Deepening

Finding meaning in the suffering (post-suffering growth). Consideration of times when we have needed other's forgiveness. Knowing that we're not alone. Becoming aware that forgiveness allows us to feel more connected with others and to experience decreased negative emotion towards, the person/people, the world and ourselves.



Consider the law of “sowing and reaping” and then write your thoughts below.

What will I reap if I choose to forgive?

What will I reap if I don't choose to forgive?

Strategies & Tips to Move Through the Forgiveness Process More Gracefully

1. Implement Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) to help keep the central nervous system stable. You may find that when attempting to forgive you will activate the fight-flight-freeze response. Signs of this may be, heart-racing, uncontrollable crying, waves of intense anger, nausea, feeling shaky or tingles. These are all possible signs of your sympathetic nervous system being activated and re-traumatizing may be taking place. EFT or “tapping” on specific acupressure points of the body can help to reduce these sensations and result in a more stabilize & grounded feeling when moving through forgiveness (for visual guides regarding “tapping” please see my website: www.nurturingourwellbeing.com)
2. Cultivating a breathing practice so that you heighten, deepen and strengthen the mind & body connection. Doing this is essential to your healing. Breathing-power is highly underestimated.
3. We all store our emotions in different parts of our body. For one person it might be tightness in the neck & shoulders, for another individual it might be a stiff lower back. Subconsciously we may hold our emotions regarding how we have been wronged in different parts of our body. Releasing unpleasant bodily tension is essential as it can become a barrier to experiencing quality sleep and let’s face it, being in chronic discomfort impacts our patience and/or desire to move. Try muscle relaxation for a complete release of unwanted tension.
4. Journal with the intention to capture the action of mindset shift. This means incorporate cognitive behavior therapy concepts within your journaling. We at times may journey to vent, to capture what we are grateful for, but the journaling I invite you to try is to capture your cognitive shifts and those that connect the dots to your core beliefs & the injustice/wrong doing which you experienced. This strategy may require some guidance and if unfamiliar it is encouraged to seek a clinician or speak to your family doctor about making a referral to a clinician who can teach you CBT concepts.

Remember Self-Care is the Best Care & Your Time Is N.O.W

Disclaimer: Resource content regarding the stages of forgiveness incorporates some of the work developed by Enright and Fitzgibbons. It is also important to mention that the process for self-forgiveness often flows differently. The strategies above can be helpful in both forgiving others and in situations when self-forgiveness is needed (which is usually often)

In gratitude,

