

The Forgiveness Guide.... Making Peace in Your Life a Priority



How many of us would like to have more energy each day, or feel more productive in our professional or personal life? There seems to be so much to do these days, which can make it difficult for us to slow down for a minute and be mindful of our feelings. Perhaps our lack of energy is caused by stress, anxiety, or lack of sleep, which could stem from feelings we are unaware of, such as holding grudges or feelings of resentment towards someone close to us in our lives? If asked, many people would probably say they forgive everyone, and they have no anger or resentment towards anyone in their lives. This could be true for some, but others could be holding onto grudges that they are unaware of. Most people will fill up their day with work, which can make it difficult for them to even have a minute to detox from the day. Perhaps some people like staying busy so they can avoid being in touch with their feelings and dealing with tough emotions. This can work for a while, but in time, things will surface and they will have to face some challenging situations that perhaps have been lingering for quite some time. It's important to be in touch with our feelings and confront challenges, as this can keep our mind from holding on to old baggage that we tend to carry around with us. Dealing with situations in our lives can keep our mind free from stress, and takes the weight off of our shoulders so we can have more energy and perform at our best in everything we do.



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What Forgiveness Is and What It Isn't?

Forgiveness is a conscious decision to release feelings of resentment or vengeance towards someone that has harmed you, regardless of whether they actually deserve your forgiveness. It's being able to deal with a hurtful situation that was done to you, and instead of being angry, you show love, acceptance, and compassion. It's the willingness to let go of the hurtful past, the decision to heal your heart, and no longer suffer with the anger inside of you. Forgiveness is almost like grieving, there are stages we will go through on our way to healing from the situation that happened to us.

Just as it's important to define forgiveness, we should also address what forgiveness is not. I want to be clear that forgiving others is important, however, forgiveness doesn't mean we are

condoning or excusing the offense from the other person. It's not denying the offense happened, or saying that you will forget what happened and continue to allow the person to keep hurting you. Forgiveness can help heal and repair a damaged relationship, however, it doesn't mean you have to reconcile with the person. Being able to forgive helps empower us and to recognize that we don't have to let our anger control all aspects of our lives. Being able to let go of the past offenses that have happened to us can give us peace, and send us in a more positive direction with our thoughts, which can give us a brighter future.

Why Should We Forgive?

When someone hurts us, we tend to ruminate over the situation and stay angry towards that person for quite some time. Certainly, we all affect each other, but keeping that resentment inside of us doesn't hurt the other person, it only hurts ourselves, mentally and physically. Forgiveness is more for you than for the person that hurt you. In order to have peace and stability in our lives, we have to keep negative feelings out of our mind and focus on moving past events that hurt us. Once you forgive, you will no longer be the victim and you will begin to feel that heavy weight lifted off of your shoulders. Think of forgiving as a gift to yourself; allowing old wounds to heal and getting the peace back in your life.

There is a great quote from Nelson Mandela that really gives a good picture of how being unforgiving can take a toll on our lives, "Harboring unforgiveness is like drinking poison and hoping your enemy will die." If we refuse to forgive, and hold the anger and resentment towards others, we keep our brain in a "fight or flight" response, which can lead to negative health effects, such as feeling increases in our stress levels, having stomach aches, and feelings of physical discomfort (aches and pains) throughout our body. Studies have revealed that forgiveness can reduce our blood pressure, boost immunity, reduce pain and inflammation, decrease anxiety and depression, and strengthen relationships. When we're able to forgive, we can release tension from our bodies, which allows us to improve our sleep, have less abdominal tension, improve muscle tension, and provide more peace so we are able to make good decisions. We need to keep our body in a natural state of balance, therefore, letting go of grudges is so critical for our well-being.



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Forgiveness for Yourself and Others:

Most of us are typically harder on ourselves than others, therefore, we can struggle to forgive ourselves when we make mistakes or do things we later regret. So, one way we can begin to forgive, is starting with ourselves. Self-forgiveness is realizing that we are all imperfect, and mistakes are going to happen, so being able to accept this can help us to let go of the guilt and shame, learn from our mistakes and move on. There is no reason to judge or punish ourselves

over something in the past since we are unable to change that situation. Once we forgive ourselves, we will find it easier to forgive others. Being able to soften our heart towards ourselves and others will help us to be successful in not only forgiving things in the past, but to help us with other situations that might arise in the future.

It's important to recognize that everyone is different, and people base all of their decisions on what they've learned over their lifetime so far. This is not excusing their behavior, but instead, giving us an understanding as to why they hurt us and being able to forgive them and move on. It's important not to sit around ruminating on the anger from the hurt that was done to us, as this can lead us down a very negative path, and will drain our energy. Instead of using our energy on the rumination, we can use that energy for other things, such as getting our goals met and spending time with family and friends. Accomplishing things in our lives can not only help us to move on, but it can create higher self-esteem and better health. We have to change the way we view and handle situations in order to obtain more peace in our lives



Steps to Forgiveness:

Here are the steps to forgiveness that will help you in your journey to healing. Your life is precious....please don't spend anymore time ruminating on the past, but instead concentrate on healing and spending your time on things that will bring you great health and happiness.

1. **Becoming Aware of Your Feelings**—Most people will not talk about being angry at someone else, but instead, they will hold it inside and try to ignore the feeling. It can be difficult to open this box, but it needs to be done in order to start the healing process. You can take out a journal or just some loose sheets of paper and write down the name of the person that hurt you, what they did, and how it affected you. This can take time and perhaps bring up some old emotions, so be kind to yourself and try not to rush through this process. You can go as far back as you want (childhood, school, jobs, family, friends or romantic relationships). Some unforgiveness might be easier to move past if it's not someone close to us.
2. **Decide to Forgive**—Once you have written down the people and situations that hurt you from the past, look over the paper (or papers), and make sure you are ready to forgive. It's one thing to write down what's happened to you, but it's another to be ready to forgive the ones that hurt us, especially if the situation was pretty significant. Once you make the commitment to yourself that you want to feel better and you are ready to forgive, you are on your way to the next step. Just remember that forgiveness is about your journey to healing, not about the person that hurt you. The situation is over, and no longer has power over you, it's your choice to forgive and move on from the situation.
3. **Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) and Reframing** —Let's take the information you wrote down in Step 1 and use it with the EFT and Reframing technique. EFT is a self-help technique that involves tapping near the end points of the “energy meridians” that

are located around the body, which can reduce tension and promotes a deep mind-body connection. If you go to The Tapping Solution website (<https://www.thetappingsolution.com/what-is-eft-tapping/>), you can get a better idea of this technique (scroll down to the bottom of the website where it has the “Introduction to The Tapping Points” video). EFT not only helps with forgiveness, but you might find it useful in other areas of your life as well. Reframing is when we look at something from a different perspective; giving us another way of looking at the situation or challenge we are facing. By combining both, the EFT technique and Reframing, we can help to relax the mind and work on giving the situations that occurred with others a different meaning. Again, we are not excusing their behavior, but perhaps if we look at things differently, we can alter the way we play out the scenario in our mind. By doing this, we can change how that situation made us feel, which can guide us to move past our anger and resentment towards that person. You can start this process by sitting or laying in a quiet area. Please use the website that is mentioned above to see the points you will be tapping. It would be good to have your sheet nearby that you wrote out your thoughts. Perhaps you could write down some notes of what you’d like to say while doing the tapping, or just think of what you want to say as you do it, whatever is more comfortable for you. Here are some examples that might help guide you in what to say while you’re tapping; *Identifying the issue (name the problem or emotion — “even though I’m having this anger and resentment towards my father, I love and accept myself and my feelings” or “even though I’m having a really hard time forgiving my father, I honor and accept how I feel about this”), create a reminder phrase (create a short phrase which helps you to refer to the problem or memory in a specific way — “My father has caused me so much pain with the way he treated me throughout my childhood”), rate the issue (determine on an “intensity scale” ranging from 1–10 how significant the problem is to you — “this problem is a 9 out of 10, and has really taken a toll on my life both mentally and physically” or “the pain I’m going through being angry at my father is so unbelievable and it’s making me feel sick”), set up an affirmation (come up with a self-affirming phrase that helps you feel powerful against the issue or that changes what happened — “I know my father is human, and doesn’t make all the best choices, so I am going to take control of my feelings and forgive him even though he doesn’t deserve to be forgiven” or “I realize he was doing his best at the time, given his own history and belief systems, so I will choose to forgive him, and I am going to take back my life”) , tuning in for re-rating (Tune in to how you are feeling about the tapping session, rating the problem once again on a scale from 0–10 — “I’m now starting to feel less pain with this situation, and my level of anger and resentment is now a 5 out of 10” or “my level of anger and resentment is so much less now that I can finally start to move towards more peace in my life because this burden is coming off of my shoulders”), repeat the process (if you still feel stuck, find a new positive affirmation and repeat the process).*

4. **Focus on Positive Goals**—As you are doing the EFT tapping and reframing your mind, you’ll want to make sure your life is moving in a positive direction. Making goals for the future can be helpful to keep you busy and give you something else to focus on rather than ruminating on past events. Pain can slowly get better in time if we focus on other things that will bring us a feeling of moving forward, and not staying stuck in the discomfort of past circumstances. Remember, we no longer live in the place where we were hurt, we are now in a different time, a healing time.
5. **Meditation**—Meditating is helpful for many things, including forgiveness. It’s possible if we see, hear or smell something that reminds us of the circumstance that hurt us, we can get triggered. Meditation can be very helpful to get us through those challenges. While you

are meditating, you can focus on the compassion you have for others and forgiving them. It's important to take deep breaths and focus on feeling calm and in the present moment. This can help quiet the mind and recenter ourselves, making it easier to cope with emotions in a healthier way.

6. **Counseling**—If you find it challenging to move past forgiveness, it might be a good idea to talk to someone you can trust, such as a family member, friend, life coach, or a counselor. Being able to talk through situations can really help us to process our emotions and feel better.

Tips to Help with Forgiveness:

Here are some tips that might be helpful as you go through your journey to forgiveness.

Intrusive Thoughts—When we forgive, it still takes time for our mind to forget about the situation, especially if we are triggered by something we encounter, reminding us of the event. We need to make sure we are prepared to face those times if they should arise. If you have images or thoughts of the situation, remember that it's not bad to have the thoughts, however, we need to make sure we don't allow those thoughts to linger too long. When you have the thought, allow yourself to feel it, accept it, and then slowly redirect yourself by either thinking of a calming place, or do something to distract yourself from dwelling on those thoughts. Keeping ourselves focused on doing productive things can really help us in these situations.

Healing/Time—Please be patient with yourself through the healing process. Pushing past ruminating thoughts of pain can take time, so please allow yourself to take as much time as you need.

Talk to family, friends, a life coach, or a therapist if you need to talk. Just be sure you are doing good self-care and not shutting out those people in your life that love you. It's important to stay connected to other good people so you can feel the support you need in this challenging time.

Control—It's important that we concentrate on what we can control around us, and not the things that are out of our control. For example, we can't control what others are going to do or how they will react to us and around us. If someone is going to be ugly to us, we have to remember that they are probably hurting from something that was done to them. This in no way means we deserve to be treated badly, or that we need to stay around and put up with being treated that way. It's just important to be mindful about those types of situations, and know that we are amazing, and we can't let others bring us down when they are acting hurtful towards us. We must stay in our positive mindset. We can only control our thoughts and actions.

Exercise—Getting the body moving can not only help with physical health, but it can help with your mental health as well. There are many things you can do for exercise; walking, jogging, lifting weights, yoga, swimming, basketball, and Zumba. Those are just a few examples, there are so many other ways you can exercise, just be sure to find something you enjoy and go out and do it.

Practice Gratitude—If we are in a state of gratitude and always remember the things that are going right in our lives, it won't leave much room for negative rumination. So practice this daily (writing them down, or reciting them in the morning when you're getting ready to go out).

Boundaries—It's good to set boundaries with others, such as making sure you don't say yes to things you would rather not do. When we do this, we can later feel regret that we agreed to do something, which can lead to frustration with ourselves for agreeing to it, and for the other person that asked us to do it. Remember that it's ok to say no if we don't want to do something.

It's also important to evaluate our relationships and make sure we are not in an unhealthy relationship. You are a good person and deserve respect, trust, and love from others. You can forgive someone for hurting you, but just be sure the person is respecting you and not hurting you to the point it is making your health deteriorate.



Life will fall into place....Just take it one day at a time

Forgiveness is possible in any situation, however, it takes time, so please be patient. It's like playing a sport, it takes daily practice. Also, remember the health benefits you will get from being forgiving. We all deserve to live a great life, so we must let go of the things that don't serve us well. We have the power to take control of our thoughts, and we can get out of the victim mentality and move to a more peaceful and productive life. By letting go of the anger and resentment, we open ourselves up for good things to come into our lives. Remember that the best revenge is a life that is well lived.

Thanks for reading my article! I hope this information helps you on your journey to forgiveness.

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