



## The Steps of Forgiveness

**Forgiveness is about giving something away instead of holding onto it.** If we are unwilling to totally forgive somebody, then we are actively saying, “I choose to keep this wound open.” The weight of unresolved issues tends to wear you down over time and hinder your ability to experience life at its best. The Bible says, “If you don’t forgive your brother who has sinned against you, how can your Father forgive you?” He’s telling us to get right with others first before we can get right with God.

**Forgiveness = Releasing a person from the obligation that resulted when they hurt you.**

**Unforgiveness = A tumor on your soul.**

**Holding on to “it” causes stress**, like walking around with 30lb weights in your pockets. This ultimately makes you run down, sick, overweight or even causes physical pain. I’ve experienced this personally, and we see it in our practice regularly.

**The key to forgiveness is sincerity.** In order for these steps to affect you and your health, you must perform them with feeling and emotion. You have to mean it when you say the words. You may be thinking, “How can I possibly forgive him for hitting me?” or “How can I forgive her for all those years of hurt?” or “How can I forgive myself for screwing things up so bad?” Big issue or small issue, without forgiveness, you are CHOOSING to bring added and unnecessary stress into your life. It’s a choice, period. These steps give you freedom and control in your life.

- 1. *Decide to Forgive the other person for whatever harm they may have caused you.*** Literally say the words (with sincerity): “I forgive (whomever) for any harm he or she has caused me.” Meditate on that statement, reminding yourself that YOU are making that choice. YOU are taking your power back because you will not remain a victim of another person’s actions. Once you feel good (even good-ish) about it, you can move on to step 2.
- 2. *Give the other person permission to forgive you for whatever harm you may have caused them.*** It is not necessary or even recommended, that the other person knows that you are taking this step; that in fact, is immaterial. It doesn’t matter whether they know or not, because this process is about YOU and your health, not getting justice or even revenge to satisfy your need to be vindicated.

**What if the other person is gone?** The other person may be geographically in a galaxy far, far away, or even be deceased at this point, and that’s okay, too. The forgiveness takes place within you. You now say, “I give (whomever) absolute permission to forgive me for any harm I may have caused him or her. Once you feel good (even good-ish) about that, you can move on to step 3.

- 3. *Forgive yourself.*** You must first forgive yourself for allowing the event to affect you, your health and your life. Forgive yourself for any harm you may have caused yourself because of this situation, action or person.

**But what if I was 100% the victim here, THEY did this to ME - I did nothing wrong?** Got it. The reality is that you had an experience with another person(s) that resulted in you having this hurt. It doesn't matter at this point, if you have a share in the responsibility for this happening or if you haven't let go of it, you were involved in the experience and you desire 100% freedom from it.

The bottom line is, you don't want ANY of it anymore and it's time to own it so that you have the power to drop it. Literally say, "I forgive myself for any harm I may have caused myself because of (whomever)." Once you feel good (even good-ish) about that, you can move on to step 4.

4. ***Wish them well*** (and mean it). You need to start *feeling* good about giving your "enemies" love. "But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you," Matthew 5:44. I know that this is hard, but it is necessary.

There is incredible freedom when you can stay in the position of power or 'cause' by doing this and the first three steps, when completed sincerely, will help you complete step four. Go ahead and say; "I wish them health and happiness all the days of their life." When you feel good about this, move onto step 5, if not circle back to step 1 if needed.

You'll know if you're getting there when you can 'wish them well' and feelgood about it.

### **Forgiveness = Freedom**

5. ***Learn the lesson***. Learn the life-lesson(s) that God has placed or allowed into your life. In fact, you benefit by choosing (there's that word again!) to actually be thankful for whatever did occur.

Things happen in our lives for a reason, whether that reason is known to us or not. Your lesson well-learned may be used as a deposit into your personal wisdom bank to avoid a similar potential problem for yourself or may shed light for someone else's potential problem. You may never know how far reaching the benefits of your shared wisdom can be for others. A painful experience today may be a saved life tomorrow.

**What if I already "dealt" with that? Or another way to ask that is; How often should we forgive? ...as many as seven times?** To that Jesus replied; "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times." Matthew 18:21-22. In other words, - this is not a 'one-and-done' proposition! It is a 'crisis-process' cycle that may be repeated several times or even multiple times over a lifetime.

**Forgiveness doesn't mean that the other person is innocent or that you have to put yourself into harm's way again. Going forward, you don't bring it up to others and don't review the story in your head. It's over.**

Use these steps to help you reconcile the disappointments and hurtful experiences in your life and **you'll be on the path to greater happiness and improved health.**