



Forgiveness

“Forgive for Good” courses are offered through the Stanford Forgiveness Project
www.learningtoforgive.com

Forgive for Good: A Proven Prescription for Health and Happiness,
the book by Frederic Luskin Ph.D.

9 Steps of Forgiveness

1. Know exactly how you feel about what happened and be able to articulate what about the situation is not OK. Then, tell a trusted couple of people about your experience.
2. Make a commitment to yourself to do what you have to do to feel better. Forgiveness is for you and not for anyone else.
3. Forgiveness does not necessarily mean reconciliation with the person that hurt you, or condoning of their action. What you are after is to find peace. Forgiveness can be defined as the “peace and understanding that come from blaming that which has hurt you less, taking the life experience less personally, and changing your grievance story.”
4. Get the right perspective on what is happening. Recognize that your primary distress is coming from the hurt feelings, thoughts and physical upset you are suffering now, not what offended you or hurt you two minutes – or ten years – ago. Forgiveness helps to heal those hurt feelings.
5. At the moment you feel upset practice a simple stress management technique to soothe your body’s flight or fight response.
6. Give up expecting things from other people, or your life, that they do not choose to give you. Recognize the “unenforceable rules” you have for your health or how you or other people must behave. Remind yourself that you can hope for health, love, peace and prosperity and work hard to get them.
7. Put your energy into looking for another way to get your positive goals met than through the experience that has hurt you. Instead of mentally replaying your hurt seek out new ways to get what you want.
8. Remember that a life well lived is your best revenge. Instead of focusing on your wounded feelings, and thereby giving the person who caused you pain power over you, learn to look for the love, beauty and kindness around you. Forgiveness is about personal power.
9. Amend your grievance story to remind you of the heroic choice to forgive.

The practice of forgiveness has been shown to reduce anger, hurt depression and stress and leads to greater feelings of hope, peace, compassion and self confidence. Practicing forgiveness leads to healthy relationships as well as physical health. It also influences our attitude which opens the heart to kindness, beauty, and love.

By Fred Luskin, Ph.D.

The following practices are taken from the article “Forgiveness” from the *Healing and Awakening into Wholeness and Aliveness Newsletter*, May 2010
By Linda Graham, MFT www.lindagraham-mft.com

Fred Luskin’s guided visualization for dropping into a space of kindness and love:

Sit or lie down comfortably. Breathe gently into your belly, slowly in and out. Breathe a sense of goodness into your belly. Breathe into your belly as though you were safe.

Now remember people or things in your life you are grateful for. Savor the gratefulness throughout your body. Remember moments of kindness in your life, when people have been kind to you, then when you have been kind to others. Savor the feeling of kindness throughout your body. Remember a moment of feeling loved and cherished by someone, then remember a moment of you loving and cherishing someone, even a beloved pet. Savor the feeling of love throughout your body.

Let yourself claim the goodness of your own self now. Let that open into a sense of the goodness of humanity. This is the place within that forgiveness comes from. States of kindness, compassion, good will. From here it becomes possible to forgive.

Jack Kornfield’s three meditations on forgiveness:

Let yourself sit comfortably, allowing your eyes to close and your breath to be natural and easy. Let your body and mind relax. Breathing gently into the area of your heart, let yourself feel all the barriers you have erected and the emotions you have carried because you have not forgiven – not forgiven yourself, not forgiven others. Let yourself feel the pain of keeping your heart closed. Breathing softly, begin reciting the following words, letting the images and feelings that come up grow deeper as you repeat them.

1. FORGIVENESS FROM OTHERS

There are many ways that I have hurt and harmed others, have betrayed or abandoned them, caused them suffering, knowingly or unknowingly, out of my pain, fear, anger, and confusion.

Let yourself remember and visualize the ways you have hurt others. See the pain you have caused out of your own fear and confusion. Feel your own sorrow and regret. Sense that finally you can release this burden and ask for forgiveness. Take as much time as you need to picture each memory that still burdens your heart. And then as each person comes to mind, gently say:

I ask for your forgiveness, I ask for your forgiveness.

2. FORGIVENESS FOR YOURSELF

Just as I have caused suffering to others, there are many ways that I have hurt and harmed myself. I have betrayed or abandoned myself many times in thought, word, or deed, knowingly or unknowingly.

Feel your own precious body and life. Let yourself see the ways you have hurt or harmed yourself. Picture them, remember them. Feel the sorrow you have carried from this and sense that you can release these burdens. Extend forgiveness for each act of harm, one by one. Repeat to yourself:

For the ways I have hurt myself through action or inaction, out of fear, pain, and confusion, I now extend a full and heartfelt forgiveness. I forgive myself, I forgive myself.

3. FORGIVENESS FOR THOSE WHO HAVE HURT OR HARMED YOU

There are many ways I have been harmed by others, abused or abandoned, knowingly or unknowingly, in thought, word or deed.

We have been betrayed. Let yourself picture and remember the many ways this is true. Feel the sorrow you have carried from this past. Now sense that you can release this burden of pain by gradually extending forgiveness as your heart is ready. Recite to yourself:

I remember the many ways others have hurt, wounded, or harmed me, out of fear, pain, confusion, and anger. I have carried this pain in my heart long enough. To the extent that I am ready, I offer you forgiveness. To those who have caused me harm, I offer my forgiveness. I forgive you, I forgive you.

Let yourself gently repeat these three directions for forgiveness until you feel a release in your heart. For some great pains you may not feel a release; instead, you may experience again the burden and the anguish or anger you have held. Touch this softly. Be forgiving of yourself for not being ready to let go and move on. Forgiveness cannot be forced; it cannot be artificial. Simply continue the practice and let the words and the images work gradually in their own way. In time you can make the forgiveness meditation a regular part of your life, letting go of the past and opening your heart to each new moment with a wise loving kindness.

OTHER PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT FORGIVENESS:

Letting go, grieving, and equanimity are three additional practices that complement the work of forgiveness. Each offers a wise and simple form, a gracious language to encourage the heart to let go, to heal, and to come to rest. Let your own intuition guide you as to which of the meditations to practice. Stay with it as long as it serves you, then return when you are ready to the ongoing practice of forgiveness.

Excerpted from *The Art of Forgiveness, Loving Kindness and Peace*, by Jack Kornfield