



## Forgiving Oneself

As Alexandra Asseily says in the film, *“I think that if we all just remember that if we forgive ourselves, it’s a wonderful beginning to forgiveness. Because actually if we really forgive ourselves for all the wickedness we think we have inside or all the things we think are wrong with ourselves, we would then be so much more compassionate with others. And I think probably it’s our lack of compassion with ourselves that makes us so upset with others.”*

Forgiving yourself is an opportunity to free you of pain and anger that has built up over time. Forgiveness moves you from focusing on a past hurt into the present. You may not forget the hurtful event, but you can move on with your life. This choice to forgive yourself may not be a one-time event and may take time to do, but over time you will find yourself living without the familiar pain you are used to carrying with you. Forgiving yourself may not be easy, but the alternative is choosing to live with the pain of bitterness and resentment toward yourself.

Failure to forgive ourselves can result in

- Continually being hurt by unresolved pain, suffering and ways of acting that harm us
- Low self-esteem and low self-worth
- Being overly defensive or distant in relationships
- Unnecessary guilt and remorse that wear us down.
- Self-destructive behavior

Forgiving ourselves can have many benefits such as:

- Learning to love yourself in healthy ways and no longer beating yourself up for your mistakes
- Realizing we are human and all make mistakes
- Letting go of hurtful memories and painful events and developing an optimistic view for the future
- Realizing you have value and self-worth can open you up to loving others in new ways and demanding respect for yourself

### **Self-forgiveness Exercise:**

1. Write down an event for which you wish to seek forgiveness from yourself. Recall areas in your life where bitterness, resentment and unforgiveness reside. Write with as much detail and clarity as you can recall.
  - a. Recognize the hurt.
  - b. Forgiveness does not minimize the hurt and pain you feel. Realize what hurt you feel and that you can move past the hurt when you are ready to choose to forgive.
2. Read over the event you have written. Have you held onto these feelings a long time? Does this area affect the way you live your life and interact with others?
  - a. You may want to tell your story to a trusted friend, family member or counselor.

3. Grieve the hurt / damage done and work through any anger. It is very natural to be angry at oneself for not being perfect, but no one is perfect.
  - a. Realize you are not perfect; forgive yourself for what you did wrong.
  - b. Choose to release the negative emotions associated with the incident
  - c. Realize that we all make mistakes, are imperfect and in need of forgiveness.  
Forgive yourself for any wrongs you have done
  - d. Realize that you are a good person and not deserving of being punished or hurt.  
Let go of pain. If you still hold onto pain and resentment, it will be harder to give and receive forgiveness.
4. Shred or burn the list as a visual symbol of letting go.
5. Repeat the exercise for other areas of unforgiveness.
6. Move forward in your life without the burden of unforgiveness.
  - a. Give yourself permission to shed the hurt, pain, anger and to begin to heal by living in peace.
  - b. When the event or pain from the event resurface, remind yourself that you have forgiven yourself and that you chose to move on with your life without the pain.

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