



## Promoting forgiveness in the family

Here are some suggestions on how to create a home where forgiveness can grow and flourish

**Try not to let transgressions happen.** It seems obvious, but the most surefire way to prevent negative unforgiving feelings from building up within the family is to treat each other with love and respect. Love is being willing to value one's partner or child, and it involves treating that person with the respect he or she deserves as a human regardless of how badly the person messes up or disappoints you. People are imperfect and will, in fact, at times mess up. Nevertheless, if people treat each other with mutual respect, those transgressions occur less frequently.

**Keep a short list.** When the other person messes up, do not allow the hurts to continue to build and fester as if it were an infected wound. Sometimes, it is impossible to discuss wrongs immediately. Sometimes the anger level is so high that immediate discussion might be counterproductive. But as soon as possible, try to speak respectfully about the transgression and come to a resolution.

**Do not keep score.** Not keeping score keeps us and asked loving each other rather than counting the number of injustices perceived.

**Be quicker to say "I'm sorry" than to expect the other person to apologize.** When people live in close relationships, they tend to experience as important the things that are done wrong to them more than they are bothered by the things they do wrong to the other person. People therefore naturally tend to look for times when the other person should be apologizing for his or her actions. For a harmonious family, people should be vigilant to detect the times when they themselves might have hurt a family member. The offender should seek out the harmed party to apologize quickly and thoroughly. The offender should take responsibility for his or her own acts and tried to assure the offended party at the offender will try not to act hurtfully again.

**Begin with the couple, not the children.** The foundation for a forgiving family is the relationship between the parents. Although children how way of turning the family into a child centered enterprise the best families have a strong and loving relationship between the partners that close to the children instead of focusing the love and attention on the children and holding it close to the partner. Therefore, encourage family members to keep the parental relationship strong and loving.

**Teach children how to forgive early in their lives.** When the child is very young, the parents can encourage the child to decide to forgive. Children may not have the capacity for full deliberate emotional forgiveness, but they can learn to grant forgiveness and not hold onto vengeful attitudes or planned paybacks or vengeance. The parents can simply instruct the children to forgive their brother or sister and describe to

the children what that means. Children can learn from this instruction how to learn to make decisions to control their behavior. Parents can use modeling to teach children how to forgive. Parents can teach the children how to forgive by showing them how to forgive. Parents can also demonstrate forgiveness by practicing it with outsiders. Parents are offended or wrong to numerous times, as we all are. Instead of railing against the person who wrongs us that parents can decide to forgive and practice that attitude, keeping grudge holding, vengeance, and critical comments to a minimum.

**Parents can develop family rules.** A family rule might be, quote we do not hold onto anger toward members of the family," or quote we do not act vengefully toward people who have wronged us." Whatever rules that the family agrees upon, it is important that the parents practice those rules and enforce them and their children. Throughout the lifespan, transgressions occur. When people expect to remain in close personal contact, they must do something to work out their differences and later to heal the painful wounds that transgressions can be. In close personal relationships, much of this can be worked out in a two-way conversation or in therapy involving the affected parties. But in social units like family school or work place it is rare that only two parties are affected.

**If you can't seem to make progress, consider professional intervention.** The family is the primary building block of society, and therapists see many people unhappy with their family. As a result, several interventions have been developed to promote forgiveness and reconciliation in the home.

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