

Exercise: Forgive

Forgiveness means creating a new story about what happened – a story that is peaceful and self-empowering.

Step 1. Do a Forgiveness Inventory

Examine different areas of your life and make a list of all the people you need to forgive (parents, siblings, other family members, friends, former partners, coworkers, employers, government, etc) and the things you need to forgive them for.

You may also include yourself in this list.

Step 2. Identify Your Grievance

Select one person from your list and describe your grievance in detail. Describe what happened and your thoughts and feelings about it.

Be as honest as you can when expressing how you think of what happened and how it has caused you to suffer. Don't censor yourself.

Step 3. Describe Your Grievance Story

Try to deconstruct the story you tell yourself about your grievance.

Answer the following questions:

- What aspects of the story have you taken personally?

Do you blame someone else for how you feel?

Do you see yourself as a victim?

Step 4. Face Your Painful Emotions

All emotions are essential to our well-being and serve a purpose. They give us important feedback about what is happening around us.

- What is it that your emotions are trying to tell you about yourself and what happened?

What did you learn from this experience?

Step 7. Consider the Good Intention

What positive intention did you or the other person have at the beginning of the situation?

Step 8. Create a New, Empowering Story

Template for Writing New Story

Start with a description of what happened then answer the following prompts:

Because of this I felt _____

Because of what happened I believed _____

I now realize that _____

I have now learned from this that _____

This experience has enabled me to _____

I commit to _____

I have forgiven X for _____

I have forgiven myself for _____

I am grateful for _____

Exercise: Move Toward Compassion

Think about someone you struggle to feel compassion toward and reflect on the following questions:

Step 1: Mindfulness

Think about this person's mistake and open up your awareness. What automatic thoughts and feelings are you experiencing?

Step 2: Shared Humanity

Rather than imagining this person standing in front of you, mentally position yourself beside them and recall a time when you made a mistake whether it was a similar one, or a different one. What thoughts and feelings are you experiencing as you reflect on these shared imperfections?

Exercise: Practice Self-Compassion

Think of a recent situation when you've felt pain. It could be a physical injury or an emotional injury. Now, reflect on the following questions:

1. What did you tell yourself about your pain? Was your self-talk nurturing or was it critical? Did you validate your suffering or minimize it?

2. How did you behave toward yourself when you were hurting? Were you able to provide nurturing and validation to yourself?

3. Now, think of a dear friend or a loved one. Place them in the previous scenario, experiencing a similar pain, and reflect on the following questions:

4. What would you say to them? Would your words be nurturing or critical? Would you validate their suffering or would you minimize their pain?

5. Can you tell yourself the same thing about your own pain?
