## **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?

How can you use that information to take appropriate action?

### Step 5. Consider the Impact of Your Grievance Story

1. How does your grievance story affect various aspects of your life experience? What is it costing you (emotionally, physically, spiritually, socially)?

2. What do you gain from keeping the old story? What benefits do you get if you're to let go of it? Fill in the table below:

Person you have not forgiven			
Costs of not forgiving	Score	Benefits of forgiving	Score
Total		Total	

### Step 6. Find the Gift

Although this view may be controversial, especially for people who experienced great trauma, shifting your perspective can offer great healing and personal growth.

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
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?

## Step 3: Kindness

Consider an act of kindness or goodwill you would have wanted to receive when you made the mistake. Can you extend the same kindness to the offending person?

## **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?