

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
<i>Total</i>		<i>Total</i>	

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?

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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: Self-forgiveness

1. Think of a situation that you're struggling to forgive yourself for. Describe what happened below.

2. If you could do it over, what would you do differently?

3. What can you say to your past self to offer compassion during that situation or experience?

4. Use this formula for your self-forgiveness affirmation or you can modify it as needed.

- I accept that I'm human and I make mistakes.
- I forgive myself for
- I release myself from

5. Try writing an apology to yourself for being self-critical and harsh.

A quality apology includes three parts:

- (1) taking responsibility for our actions and their impact,
- (2) expressing regret, and
- (3) offering to fix things and make amends.
