



Learning to Forgive: The 5-Steps of Forgiveness

WHAT FORGIVENESS IS (AND IS NOT)

- Forgiveness is giving up your right to hurt someone who has hurt you.
- Forgiveness does not diminish the wrong done against you.
- Forgiveness is not a denial of what happened.
- Forgiveness does not take away the consequences the other person will face because of his or her actions.
- Forgiveness is an act and a process. Even when a person decides to forgive another person, feelings of relief or healing are usually not immediate. Forgiving someone can be difficult and uncomfortable.
- Forgiveness is not weakness. It is the most powerful thing you can do. It breaks the hold that has been put on your life. Refusing to forgive allows the person or thing that was hurtful to you continue to hurt you.
- Forgiveness does not mean forgetting. Forgiveness does not require you to become a "doormat."
- Forgiveness does not require you to open yourself up to the offender to be hurt again.
- Forgiveness does not wait for the offender to apologize or earn forgiveness in some way.

ACTION STEPS TO FORGIVENESS

1. Acknowledge the Hurt

Don't minimize it or deny the wrong that was done against you.

Don't make excuses for the offender.

Write it down. Journaling is a great way to work through anger and hurt. It organizes your thoughts and helps you acknowledge the truth as you see it in black and white. Sometimes writing a letter to the offender is helpful (this letter is usually not to be sent, but is for working through your own thoughts and feelings).

2. Identify Your Emotions

When someone does something to hurt you, you might experience regret and anger. These emotions are not wrong, but are a normal response to an offense. It is important to identify how the offense made you feel and then to express it. After writing down the offense, write down how you felt when the offense happened and how you have felt since then.

3. Cancel the Debt

Write a "blank check" of forgiveness. You may want to write down the offenses they have done and then write "Canceled" or "Paid in Full" over them. You may want to burn the letter you wrote expressing your grief and hurt.

4. Set Boundaries

Decide what you need to do to protect yourself from letting this person hurt you again. For instance, if someone is offensive to you verbally, you can choose not to associate with them, or tell them that if they begin to insult you that you will not talk to them until they are willing to speak kindly.

Don't continue to look for approval from a person who has hurt you.

5. Make a Commitment to Forgive

Make a personal or (if possible) public commitment to forgive the person for what they have done.

Commit to not using the thing they have done against you as a weapon against them. When you have doubts about whether you "really" forgave the person, remember the commitment you made to forgive. Remember that forgiveness is a choice, not a feeling.

If you are struggling to forgive an offense that was done against you, you are not alone.

Forgiving can be an extremely difficult process. The thing about unforgiveness, it will hurt you more than it hurt the person who has wronged you.

Some persons have found counseling to be helpful in the process of forgiving and moving on with one's life.

Thriveworks has Licensed Professional Counselors, Doctoral-Level expert therapists, who can help you find forgiveness, and move on with your life in a healthy, and positive way.

Call us Today at 1-855-2-THRIVE.

Not near one of our physical locations? That's okay! We can do skype and telephone counseling also.