

# The Process of Forgiveness

"To forgive, one must remember the past, put it into perspective, and move beyond it. Without remembrance, no wound can be transcended."

## Step 1: Identify the Injury and the Impact

Describe an injury you have experienced because of the choices or behaviors of someone else.

1. What are the FACTS of the story? How did it happen?

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2. How bad is it?

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3. Can I do anything about it?

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4. How long will it last?

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5. How will it affect me long term?

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6. What FEELINGS am I experiencing when I think back on this story?

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7. What is the impact of the injury? What has it cost me?

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"The more you understand the injury,  
the better you will be able to treat it."

## Talking It Out

It is very important to be able to talk about the injury with someone.

1. Can you talk it out with the one who hurt you? If yes, when? \_\_\_\_\_

If that person is not safe enough or unwilling to hear you out...

2. Can you talk it out with a friend? Who? \_\_\_\_\_

If the issue is too overwhelming...

3. Will you talk it out with a professional? Who? \_\_\_\_\_

## Step 2: Make the Injury Your Own

1. Pretending that nothing happened is a way to keep yourself safe. But in the long run, it causes more problems than good. What ways have you tried to pretend that nothing happened?

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2. Which of these MINIMIZATION phrases have you used concerning this injury?

- "It wasn't that bad."
- "Other people have been hurt worse."
- "I'm just over reacting."
- "I just need to be stronger."
- "I wish this had never happened."
- "This should never have happened in the first place."

3. What happened can't be undone. In order to keep looking forward instead of backwards, it's time to let the injury become part of your story. Write out the facts of the situation including how your life is now. (*Example: My wife asked for a divorce. I am an ex-husband instead of a husband. I am now a single father. I only have one income to support my children.. etc...*)

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### 3. Identify the Responsible Party

"If no one is responsible for the injury then there is no one to forgive for it."

1. WHO is responsible for your injury? (Don't worry about HOW or WHY right now).

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2. If you feel resistance to the question above, why is it hard to place responsibility on that person? What will happen if you put the responsibility on that person?

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3. It is important to separate responsibility from motivation. Complete the following:

"Even though (use one of the phrases below) \_\_\_\_\_,  
I still experienced \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### Rationalization and Justification Phrases

- "They didn't mean to hurt me."
- "They didn't know what to do."
  - "They tried their best."
  - "They were hurt as well."

4. When we can't blame the person who injured us we usually blame ourselves. How have you taken INAPPROPRIATE responsibility for the other person's actions?

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"A person of low self-esteem is more likely  
to blame themselves for a failure  
than a person of high self-esteem."

5. Because of developmental limitations, children have a hard time blaming their parents for wrong-doing until they are adults. (Ideas like intentionality or wrongness may be too hard for children to grasp.) If you've had a difficult time acknowledging the mistakes of your parents, list out a few things that they have done that you wouldn't want them to do to your children.

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## 4. Start Balancing the Accounts

In this step there is nothing more that needs to be known about the injury. Now something needs to be done.

1. Describe your injury using PAST TENSE phrases (*Example*: “I am stuck because my parents divorced” becomes “I WAS stuck because my parents divorced”.)

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2. Consequences are the natural part of any mistake. List out the natural consequences the offender should experience in each of the following area:

Relationally \_\_\_\_\_

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Personally \_\_\_\_\_

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Legally \_\_\_\_\_

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Physically \_\_\_\_\_

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Spiritually \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. Forgiveness does not mean that the offender necessarily has the same rights and privileges they had previously. What are some practical boundaries that need to be put in place with the person who caused your injury.

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## The Power of CHOOSING to Forgive

"To release another from debt does not mean that they were right and you were wrong. It only means that, even though you were right and they hurt you, you do not want or need them to pay you back." "To do away with a debt is to forsake any remaining idea that the injurer has resources that you want. Even if the injurer is better off than you are, when you choose to forgive in your heart, you want nothing from the person who hurt you—an apology, a promise, a loan, or a plane trip. You are strong within yourself. You need nothing from your injurer and wish no harm. You are even. These things you CHOOSE. They do not just happen. But while choice brings responsibility, the new freedom in your life is well worth it."

There is great power when you no longer expect to receive anything from your offender. Knowing that they cannot make up for the injury, YOU get to make the choice to release the injurer from debt. Since they no longer owe you anything you can move forward in your changed life instead of demanding something from the past.

1. How have you still been connected or bonded to the injury or the offender?

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2. It's time to cut the bonds with the injury and the offender. For each behavior listed above, what new behavior can you do that separates you from the injury or the offender?

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3. Curiosity is a very powerful tool. Since you are in a new place because of the injury you experienced, notice and list out the new experiences you've had because of where you are at in this process. Notice the things currently, not worrying about the future or where you will eventually be.

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4. Even though your injury has changed you, what positive things will you get to experience in the future because of this new condition?

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"Forgiveness is freeing up and putting to better use the energy once consumed by holding grudges, harboring resentments, and nursing unhealed wounds." *Sidney and Suzanne Simon*



# Forgiving Yourself

1. Describe a mistake or failure that you've made that still feels painful to you or the person you have injured.

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2. What was their response to your mistake?

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3. What are the natural consequences of your mistake that the person you injured is going to have to endure?

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4. Trusting (= letting go of control) that those you hurt are responsible for their own reactions is difficult. You don't want them to hurt or experience the natural consequences of your choice. Trusting that they will heal and not stay wounded forever is also difficult. What is the anticipated natural time frame for someone to heal from their types of injuries?

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5. No one deserves to be punished for their mistake forever. Every failure has an APPROPRIATE amount of time that consequences should be experienced. For your mistake, what is the APPROPRIATE amount of time before you are able to say, "I no longer need to feel bad for that mistake." Explain why you put that amount of time.

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6. Because of your mistake the relationship will never be the same. Some of the changes may be positive, some of them may be painful. Either way, you can't undo the changes. Describe the painful changes that have happened.

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7. Describe the positive changes that have happened.

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8. Sometime, the injured person is more willing to forgive than you are. How have you been reminding yourself or the injured person that you made a mistake? How often do you do that?

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9. When will be the last time you remind the injured party or yourself that you made a mistake? \_\_\_\_\_

10. Mistakes are redeemed when you find value in the experience. What have you learned from your mistake and how have you applied that to the way you live now?

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Remember—Forgiveness doesn't...

- ... happen first
- ... happen fast
- ... happen easily
- ... mean forgetting
- ... mean excusing
- ... mean trusting
- ... make you weak
- ... mean reconciliation