

## FORGIVENESS

Many of us come to Emotions Anonymous with a burden of pain from the past. We may not want to hear that forgiveness will help us heal the hurts from our pasts. But in time, we begin to understand that forgiveness is for us. It's what we need to do to move beyond our pain and grow spiritually and emotionally.

Working the EA program brings us to an understanding of forgiveness. Steps One, Two, and Three bring us to an understanding of, and connection to our Higher Power. Steps Four and Five help us realize where we need to exercise forgiveness in our lives. Steps Six and Seven prepare us for the acts of forgiving. Steps Eight and Nine are taking the actual actions needed to forgive, both ourselves and others. Then we can begin to move beyond being stuck in resentments and old pain. Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve keep forgiveness in our lives daily and help us give the gift of recovery to others.

As in so much of our recovery process, a decision to forgive must come before the forgiveness can take place. Very little growth occurs without our first making a decision. Forgiveness is an action. A decision to forgive and then taking the action is the beginning. When we forgive it helps to heal the resentments, guilt, and fear of the past. When forgiving, we choose to let go of these things, and turn them over to a Higher Power. As we learn about and act upon the principles of forgiveness, we will find we are able to remove ourselves from the hurts of yesterday.

Forgiveness is often not a one-time event, but more of a process. It is a new way of thinking. Rather like exercising a flabby muscle, it has to be done over and over, until it becomes our new reality. We can replace resentment with forgiveness, if we are willing.

## FORGIVING OTHERS

One of the hardest things to do is forgive a person who has not asked to be forgiven. There are legitimate times when we have been seriously hurt - perhaps in childhood when we were truly innocent victims and an adult in our fives treated us badly. We need to remember that the act of forgiving is for our benefit, not theirs. We are the ones who are hurting. We are the ones who are losing sleep and keeping ourselves in physical and emotional turmoil. This is something we do for ourselves. It is beneficial and healing, even if the person who wronged us is no longer alive.

Forgiving someone for the hurt they have inflicted on us does not mean that we need to expose ourselves to additional pain. It may be that in some cases we will decide to exclude someone from our fives, or limit the contact with that person. We can forgive, and still not bring that person near our heart again, if they indicate that they will continue to hurt us. This is taking care of ourselves, and it is a healthy action.

## FORGIVING OURSELVES

Doubtless, we have inflicted pain on other people in our lives, intentionally or unintentionally. Continuing to beat ourselves up over our past actions hinders our recovery. If we are to continue to heal, we will forgive ourselves. It's been said that "forgiveness is giving up all hope of a better past." When we release the hope that we can change something in the past, the way to forgiveness becomes more clear.

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A portion of working our EA program is forgiving ourselves, and then treating ourselves with the dignity and respect we deserve. We are no greater or lesser than any other person, and we need to treat ourselves as well as we would another.

## THOUGHTS ON FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is a hard process for me, and forgiving myself is the hardest. I used to believe that forgiving was a sign of weakness. Now I know it takes courage and makes me stronger. I know I cannot grow without forgiveness. The key for me is to begin the process. It is helpful for me to make a list of all the reasons why not forgiving is hurting me much more than it hurts anybody else. I know when I am lying awake full of anger, the person I'm angry at is sleeping peacefully.

-Mary Jane

Before we can make our amends in Step Nine, we need to be sure we have no ill will towards the person. Without this forgiveness we might find ourselves bringing up past hurts instead of us making our amends to them.

-Renee

Forgiveness is a process.

-Julius

Forgiveness encompasses forgiving ourselves as we are only human and make mistakes. It entails asking our Higher Power for forgiveness. It means letting go of the past and forgiving those who have harmed us, as

They are human too.

-Joyce

Our minds turn the events and actions of yesterday over and over and we end up striking out at others in the same way it happened to us. Revenge is not one of the tools we are given to use in the program. Revenge does not give us satisfaction. Forgiveness does.

-Paul