

Forgiveness & Letting Go

Our goals for this module are:

1. To understand what forgiveness is and is not
2. To understand why we need to forgive by looking at the healing effects of forgiveness and the harmful effects of not forgiving
3. To adopt a forgiving attitude and to learn to forgive

Forgiveness

When is forgiveness required? Forgiveness is required when:

1. An offender inflicted an injury (physical, emotional, mental, spiritual) onto us, which we perceived as an injustice
2. We inflict an injury onto someone else
3. We inflict an injury onto ourselves

What is forgiveness? Forgiveness is the willingness to let go of the perceived needs to judge and punish the offender and the actual act of doing so.

What forgiveness is not: [Click here for a list of myths on forgiveness](#)

Why Forgive?

We need to forgive for our own well-being. Forgiveness is essential for our own healing. Keeping the pain, the resentment and the grudge within us only makes the injury worse. Its toxic effects seep into every area of our life, poisoning our physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health as well as our relationships with our loved ones and friends.

On the other hand, genuine forgiveness rewards us with lots of benefits physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. It opens our heart and mind to better relationships with ourselves as well as others. It is as if the heart is freed from a prison it has created for itself. It makes us stronger, more honest and authentic and helps us to gain inner peace.

A Forgiving Attitude

How do we acquire a forgiving attitude? What exactly is a forgiving attitude?

The normal mental tendency is one that feels it needs to judge and to punish the offender for the perceived injustice. Not punishing the offender feels like an injustice in itself. This attitude makes the mind rigid, vengeful and constantly stressful, and therefore harmful to self.

A forgiving attitude has these three qualities:

1. **Letting go** of the perceived needs to judge and to punish the offender
2. **Taking responsibility** for our own roles, judgments, decisions and choices in that encounter
3. **Accepting the consequences** of those choices

How to Forgive

Forgiveness begins with:

1. An **honest, open and willing** (HOW) heart to forgiveness
2. A readiness to forgive.

How do you know that you are ready to forgive? You are ready to forgive when:

1. You feel that letting go of your pain, fear and sorrow is better than hanging on to them
2. You want to learn about and heal any unhealthy and difficult patterns that stem from a painful past
3. You are ready and willing to embrace life fully

One easy to do forgiveness model is the Forgiveness Sandwich.

The Forgiveness Sandwich

This forgiveness model has four steps, and is compared to a peanut butter and jelly sandwich in which there is a top opening layer of bread, with a second peanut butter layer that is sticky, gooey and rather unpleasant, a third layer of jelly which is sweet and a closing layer of bread.

Here are the four steps:

1. READY (OPENING)
2. RELEASE
3. RECEIVE
4. REFRAME (CLOSING)

Step 1 – Ready

In this step, we:

1. **Open** our heart and mind to the spiritual process of forgiveness
2. **Invoke** and invite our spiritual guides for help and support, and
3. **Create** a safe and loving space for the forgiveness process.

Step 2 – Release

Here we:

1. **Tell OUR story** about the injury, naming the offender, describing the injury and the sense of injustice felt
2. **Feel the feelings** – all the pain, resentments, fears and frustrations
3. **Release** the pent up energies accompanying the **thoughts, emotions, sensations and tears (TEST)** that we allow to flow freely without resistance and judgment.

To do this release, we can take deep in-breaths through the nostrils and followed them by exhaling through the mouth forcefully, making appropriate sounds as and when necessary. Or we can visualize an altar of love where we leave all our TEST on the altar and surrender them to the universe.

Step 3 – Receive

In this step, we inhale fresh, clean, healing energy deeply through our nostrils, allowing the energy to fill our entire being, as we:

1. **Refill and rejuvenate** ourselves physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually, and
2. **Replace** whatever we had release earlier with unconditional love

Step 4 – Reframe

In this final step, we:

1. **Let go** of OUR story and our need to judge and punish
2. **Surrender** to the wisdom of the Universe
3. **Be grateful** for the lessons learned

We make a new choice to see the entire injury from a new and higher perspective, one that allows us to grow and be free from the prison we once locked ourselves in before.

Forgiveness is a Process

Forgiveness is a process that is often long and on-going. It is not done and completed in a single session. Take your time to clear out whatever resentments, fears, anger and pain remaining as you begin a new, fresh and more vibrant life.

The Forgiveness worksheet

Step One: Preparing to Forgive

1. Open your heart and mind
2. Invoke your guardian angels, if appropriate
3. Create a safe and loving space

Step Two:

A. Tell YOUR Story

1. Identify the Perpetrator/Offender
2. Identify the injury
3. Identify the injustice/grievances

I am (feeling) _____

with/at/of (offender) _____

because he/she (injury) _____

I want/desire/hope/wish that he/she _____

B. Feel YOUR Feelings

1. Thoughts _____
2. Emotions _____
3. Sensations _____
4. Tears Allow tears to flow freely, if appropriate

C. Release YOUR Pain

1. Make the **conscious choice** to forgive.
2. Inhale deeply through your nose and exhale completely through your mouth. If you feel like making some **sound** (e.g. argh), or shout, or cry, please feel free to do so.
3. Alternatively, you can visualize an **altar of love**, where you leave all your story, pain and desires behind, trusting the universe to take care of them as appropriate and best for all.
4. Repeat #1 – #3 as many times as required.

Step Three:

1. Re-fill yourself with new, healing energy by inhaling through your nostrils and seeing this healing energy filling you physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually.
2. Replace existing energy with unconditional love.

Step Four:

1. Let go of YOUR story – Be willing to let go, Make the choice to let go
2. Surrender to the universe – Let go of the need to punish
3. Be grateful for the lessons