

♥ *Forgiveness* ♥

What does this word mean to you personally?

FORGIVENESS IS A CHOICE:

A Step-by-Step Process for Resolving Anger and Restoring Hope

Robert D. Enright, PhD

“...forgiveness is not for wimps but is instead hard work.”

What is forgiveness?

Forgiveness Defined:

When unjustly hurt by another, we forgive when we overcome the resentment toward the offender, not by denying our right to the resentment, but instead by trying to offer the wrongdoer compassion, benevolence, and love, as we give these, we as forgivers realize that the offender does not necessarily have a right to such gifts.

Joanna North, G. B.

The forgiver has the right to their feelings; to the feeling that the offense is unfair. The forgiver recognizes that they have a right to be respected--- a right not to be hurt—a right to their anger.

Forgiveness requires giving up something to which you have a right—your anger or resentment.

Forgiveness changes the forgiver.

Forgiveness=trust

Forgiveness=bargain/negotiation

Forgiveness = Reconciliation

Forgiveness begins as a private act within the heart of the forgiver.

Reconciliation is the act of two people coming together following a separation.

Why forgive?

Justice OR Mercy

Vs.

Justice And Mercy

Forgiveness is a process.

Scientific studies reveal that by comparing groups instructed in forgiveness with those who were not..we have found substantial and credible evidence that forgiveness produces benefits for those who forgive.

Many say their “resentment was a way of keeping the one who hurt them in a kind of emotional prison.. over time, they realized it was them who were imprisoned.” Our hatred affects us emotionally more than it affects the one(s) who hurt us. Some have lived with the label “victim” for so long that its become a part of them. Forgiveness beckons you outside the cell (where you know what to expect) and into the future.

People are afraid that forgiveness means pretending that nothing happened to them. They are afraid that if they forgive they are opening themselves up to being hurt again. Contrarily, to forgive, we have to admit we’ve been hurt and have the right to feel hurt, angry, or resentful.

Forgiveness does not excuse or condone the offender’s behavior.

Forgiveness is a choice, a gift. For the Catholic Christians, the challenge is not whether or not to forgive (free will), but what is that underlying moral principle that makes it (forgive) good. Forgiveness is not a moral obligation; we are morally obligated to act justly and to refrain from injuring others.

Apology: the choice to forgive is incumbent on the forgiver. An apology is not required. The offender does not have the right to keep us from forgiving—this gives too much power to the offender and denies freedom to victim.

“..the one who forgives shows self-respect because the forgiver refuses to be controlled by the bitterness of injustice any longer.” *M Holmgren, Iowa State University*

Trust: Trust is not required. Love wants the best for others, and the best for the offender is that they no longer offend. Forgiveness is free, trust is earned.—you may forgive a pedophile but never trust him with the care of children.

Can someone forgive the seemingly unforgivable? Yes, though we tend to be critical of both those who are willing to forgive the “unforgivable” and those who are not.

“No act, no matter how terrible, is unforgivable, but some people choose not to forgive. Respect for the rights of others requires that we respect that choice”

Why forgive?

- 1) You forgive to quiet your angry feelings.
- 2) Forgiveness changes destructive thoughts into quieter, more healthy thoughts.
- 3) As you forgive, you want to act more civilly toward the one who hurt you.
- 4) Forgiveness of one person helps you interact better with others. Perhaps your anger has spilled over to your relationships with others.
- 5) Forgiveness can improve your relationship with the one who hurt you.
- 6) Your forgiveness can actually help the one who hurt you to see his or her unfairness and to take steps to stop it. Your forgiving can enhance the character of the one who hurt.
- 7) You forgive because God asks you to do so. You forgive as an act of love toward God.
- 8) Forgiveness, as an act of kindness and love toward the one who hurt you, is a moral good regardless of how the other responds to you. Loving others, while protecting yourself from harm, is a morally good thing to do.

Recognizing that You are Angry

The forgiveness process is designed to help you deal with anger that has some or all of these characteristics:

- ✚ Anger that is directed toward a person or other people, not to “fate,” circumstances, or inanimate objects.
- ✚ Anger that is caused by real injustice.
- ✚ Anger that has become a pattern that is not easily broken.
- ✚ Anger that causes you to engage in self-destructive behaviors.
- ✚ Anger that affects your health or well-being.

Anger must be controlled. The expression of anger is necessary, how we express it and the duration of that expression is the issue. Anger begets anger, and is passed from one generation to the next.

American society is suffering from an epidemic of unhealthy anger, and forgiveness is rarely presented as an option to resolving anger and restoring hope.

What is your motivation to forgive?

- ✚ I am tired of feeling this pain and want it to stop.
- ✚ I don't want to go on letting this person hurt me.
- ✚ If I forgive, I will feel better.
- ✚ If I forgive, maybe I will become physically or psychologically healthier.
- ✚ I don't want to give this person the satisfaction of hurting me.

What is your worldview?

How was it formed?

How does it impact your beliefs about forgiveness?

RIGHTS: Compare and contrast

Offender's rights

1. Rt. to remain silent
2. Rt. to an attorney
3. Rt. to a jury (not juveniles)
4. Rt. to tell your side of the story
5. Rt. to make an impact statement (pre-sentencing)
6. Rt. to an appeal
7. Rt. to room and board (3 meals a day)
8. Rt. to be protected (grievance procedure)
9. Rt. to education
10. Rt. to faith and spiritual development
11. Rt. to hygiene
12. Rt. to medical treatment
13. Rt. to dental treatment
14. Rt. to psychological treatment
15. Rt. to visits
16. Rt. to phone calls
17. Rt. to attend board hearing annually
18. Rt. to bring support person to board (parent)
19. Rt. to a parole agent
20. Rt. to apply to have records sealed

Victims' Rights

1. Rt. to get property back
2. Rt. to restitution
3. Rt. to obtain benefits from fund
4. Rt. to civil action
5. Rt. to be free from intimidation
6. Rt. to make impact statement
7. Rt. to participate in parole hearing
8. Rt. to obtain information about inmate (location, release date, escapes)

