

KEY TO FORGIVENESS

By Juanita U.

Forgive; 3rd person present: **forgives**; past tense: **forgave**; gerund or present participle: **forgiving**; past participle: **forgiven** verb:

1. stop feeling angry or resentful toward (someone) for an offense, flaw, or mistake.

make allowances for, feel no resentment toward, feel no malice toward, harbor no grudge against, bury the hatchet with;

Synonyms: pardon, excuse, exonerate, absolve

Antonyms: blame, resent, punish

Forgiveness

1. the action or process of forgiving or being forgiven. verb

Synonyms: pardon, absolution, exoneration, remission, dispensation, indulgence, clemency, mercy

Antonyms: mercilessness, punishment

The following is from How Al-Anon Works for Families and Friends of Alcoholics (1995) Page 86-87

“FORGIVENESS

Resentment will do nothing except tear us apart inside. No one ever found serenity through hatred. No one ever truly recovered from the effects of alcoholism by harboring anger or fear, or by holding on to grudges. Hostility keeps us tied to the abuses of the past. Even if the alcoholic is long gone from our lives or has refrained from drinking for many years, we, too, need to learn to detach. We need to step back from the memories of alcoholic behavior that continue to haunt us. We begin to detach when we identify the disease of alcoholism as the cause of the behavior and recognize that our ongoing struggle with unpleasant memories is an effect of that disease. We, too, must find within us compassion for the alcoholic who suffered from this terrible illness.

Each of us is worthy of love, and each of us is doubly blessed when we are able to dig down past our grievances and resentments, no matter how justified we may feel in harboring them, and find within ourselves the recognition of that part of the other person that is and will be lovable. How better could we learn that we ourselves are eternally and irrevocably lovable than by recognizing that same quality in everyone around us?

Yet some of us balk at the idea of adopting such an attitude toward people who, in the past, may have caused us great physical, emotional, financial, or spiritual harm. If we find their behavior totally reprehensible, why should we bother to look for a place within ourselves that can relate to them with love? Aren't some things simply unforgivable?

To answer these questions, we must ask another: What is the purpose of our recovery? If we are truly in pursuit of serenity, of healing, of a sense of inner peace that will help us to deal with and possibly even enjoy whatever life brings, we must improve the way we interact with others. This doesn't mean that we close our eyes to the unacceptable or tolerate the intolerable. It has no bearing on what behavior we will accept, nor on whether or not we continue our present relationships. It simply means that we cultivate the ability to look beneath the surface. By shifting our focus away from the objectionable behavior and looking more deeply, we recognize a part of every human being that remains untouched by disease, the part of each of us that deserves

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unconditional love and respect regardless of the circumstances. It is equally possible to appreciate this quality in those whom we do not know as it is in someone with whom we hope to spend a lifetime. This is what forgiveness is all about. We don't forgive the actions another person has chosen, because it was never our job to judge the person for those actions in the first place. Instead, we forgive when we acknowledge our common humanity with everyone, even the person we feel the most entitled to condemn. In this spirit, we can even forgive ourselves, no matter what we've done or how guilty or shame-filled we may feel. We, too, deserve love.

Forgiveness is no favor. We do it for no one but ourselves. We simply pay too high a price when we refuse to forgive. Lingering resentments are like acid eating away at us. Rehearsing and re-rehearsing old injuries robs us of all that is precious. Shame never liberated a single spirit. And self-righteousness never softened a heart. Can we afford to perpetuate such self-destructiveness? Surely we can make better use of our time and energy. Although we may despise what others have done, if we keep in mind that everything we are now trying to do has the goal of healing us, we are bound to decide that the best thinking we can do for ourselves is to forgive.”

Questions: Do not answer yes or no...provide explanations, examples.

Am I powerless over my desire or ability to forgive someone for the hurt, pain, suffering and loss they caused me?

Am I powerless over the feelings of anger, pain, suffering or loss they caused?

Is my daily life burdened by these feelings and my inability to forgive?

Is this anger, pain, suffering or loss they caused keeping me from living my life?

Are these feelings keeping me from living a life with purpose and dignity?

Are these feelings keeping me from being the person I wish to be?

Are these feeling causing my daily life to be overwhelming?

Do I want to be free of these feelings and forgive?

What is my current belief in God?

Do I believe this God can restore me to sanity? (soundness of mind, wholeness in spirit, present in my body)

If not, what more do I need God to be, for me to believe?

Second step prayer...I ask Gods care and protection with complete abandon>

If I cannot say the prayer with complete sincerity, I further define my idea of God until I can.

Am I willing to make the decision to turn my will and my life as regards this hurt, pain, suffering and loss over to the care of God? My belief in God.

If not, why do I not want to?

What do I gain by holding on to the anger, pain, suffering or loss?

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Do I really want to be free of the bondage of these feelings?

If I am ready to make the decision, I say a prayer asking God to free me of the bondages of holding on to these feelings and grant me the ability to take the action towards freedom.

Who am I angry with and what harm did they cause me?

How have I been harmed?

Prayer asking God to put aside what this person has done to cause me harm and be willing to see where I have been wrong or made a mistake or was at fault. . **I must remember that because I see where I am wrong, does NOT make the other person right.** Ask God to let me see them as a person who has perhaps had their own pain and been hurt previously in their life

Did I cause this person harm in any way? Gossiped, judged, criticized.

Am I filled with self-pity or self-righteousness?

Was I irresponsible in this situation in any way?

Have I been over responsible in any way?

Have I been a martyr?

Have I tried to manage them or their lives?

Have I tried to manipulate them or others to obtain an apology, or action?

Perhaps I caused no harm or injury to the person. In that case, I ask myself, what is this doing for me today? Is it keeping me from having to be responsible for my life? Is it keeping me a martyr? Do I want to remain a martyr? Is it keeping me a victim? Do I want to remain a victim? Am I still holding on to it for another specific reason? Why?

List the defects of character (shortcomings) that I have now seen.

I ask God to give me the desire and the ability to see this person as God would see them.

I ask God to give the ability to see my worthiness and to feel God's love and to know my trust in God has provided me with the ability to take these actions.

Having taken these actions thus far, I share my writings with a trust worthy person.

I ask God's forgiveness for my human failings, for my shortcomings and for the willingness to let any remaining hurts go.

I continue to watch for these human feelings of anger, pain, and suffering, as I go through my day. Are they valid today? Are they tied to the old resentments? These feelings which are not helpful to God, to me or to others and when I see them, I ask God to intervene and grant me ability to use God's Power to be the person I most desire to be.