

# Forgiveness: Re-Vitalizing the Wounded Soul



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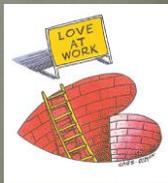
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## Definitions

- “To give up resentment against or the desire to punish.” (Dictionary)
- “Giving up the hope that the past can be any different than what it was.” (Oprah)
- (“Shoulds,” unconsciously change the truth to justify)
- “Being willing to open my heart again to a person, situation, or myself so that wholeness can be restored.” (Deborah)



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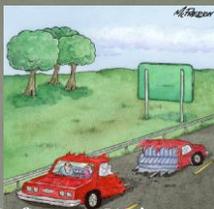
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## Forgiveness Is Not Just between People



“Well, it figures! We’re seven tenths of a mile past the warranty!”  
Forgiveness allows us to move from “Oh No!” to “Oh Well.”

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### Effects of Non-Forgiveness



- Choice to remain broken
- Blocks the energy of the Deeper Self
- Cuts myself off from a compelling force within the soul that seeks forgiveness and restoration to wholeness
- Vitality and peace remain elusive
- The person/situation REMAINS IN CONTROL OF US, still exerting its influence
- Stifles the power of Grace (Grace works in an OPEN heart)
- Keeps us from experiencing the ever-present NOW

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### Forgiveness is NOT:

- Condoning what was done
  - Going back to "business as usual." (Things **should** be different, change.)
  - Reconciliation
- (Forgiveness requires INNER work; reconciliation requires OUTER work).




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### Influences on Forgiveness

- Level of closeness prior to offense
- Whether or not act was intentional
- Whether or not act will be repeated
- Whether or not person expresses remorse
- Whether or not the offender is known/faceless



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## Distinguishing Guilt from Shame

### Shame

- Tells us that WE are wrong
- Beat ourselves up
- Artificially Created
- Designed to Punish
- Robs us of self-compassion
- Fills us with feelings of worthlessness
- Keeps us stuck and immobilized



### Guilt

- Tells us what we DID was wrong
- Can GROW us if we open up to it
- Natural
- Designed to provide feedback for learning
- Guides us toward increased compassion for self and others
- Mobilizes us into new behaviors

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“What we are and what we are not responsible for in this life is one of the greatest problems of human existence. It is never completely solved. It requires continual assessment and reassessment.”  
-M. Scott Peck MD

## Spectrum:

Assume No Guilt → Assume Too Much Guilt

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## And the In-between: Mutual Contributors

% of Responsibility

Personal Example

Combat vets: Assign % of responsibility for killing another human being to:

- US government
- Enemy government
- Lawmakers
- General
- Squad Leader
- You

Research

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**Overwhelming Feeling  
During a Traumatic Event?**  
Helplessness!

↓

"I'll never put myself in a position  
to feel so helpless again."

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Overly-controlling behaviors.

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Guilt? "If I would have just lined  
all my ducks up in a row."

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Unreasonable guilt gives the *illusion* of control.




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**No one who is Perfect is Allowed!**  
Action or non-Action Causing Guilt  
Did I have Control?

Yes      No

↓      ↓

Self-forgiveness Process      Accept Helplessness  
(let go of the  
ILLUSION of control)

Unreasonable Guilt  
Example: Survivor's Guilt

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Paradoxical Anecdote?  
**Feel Helplessness!**

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Integrative Letter Writing:  
Re-Owning & Re-homing

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I forgive you for what you thought and said about me  
and the disgust you showed when you said it.  
I forgive myself for living out the label.  
I forgive you for crawling into a bottle.  
I forgive myself for running away as soon as I could.  
I forgive you for drinking yourself to death.  
I forgive myself for leaving Dad to deal with it all.  
I forgive myself for having no guilt.

-Sandy  
Dialysis Nurse

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Common Mistake...  
the wrong part of self does the forgiving

- The part of self that has been betrayed *is the part of self that has to do the forgiving!!!!* (Otherwise, it's left in exile).

Integrating Self

Broken Aspect of Self

Wait a minute. **I'm** the one who was hurt. You don't have the authority to speak for me. **I'm** the only one who can forgive. Don't sweep me under the carpet.

- Intervention: Abide with hurt and anger First. (Re-own)
- Then, have core self nurture betrayed self back home. (Re-Home)
- Use letter-writing, rituals, etc.

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### False Forgiveness

- A way to fool ourselves into thinking we've done THE WORK of forgiveness when we have not.
- "I let that go a long time ago."
- "That's over and forgotten."
- "I don't like conflict."
- Problem? The part of self that was betrayed remains locked up, excluded from the whole self – left yearning to come home.




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### The Unfairness of Forgiveness

"It doesn't seem right that my wife was the one who had the affair, but I'm the one stuck with the burden of trying to forgive her."

Right...it takes work to grow into our larger self... the part of us that has the capacity to forgive...




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### Clues for Unresolved Forgiveness

- Anger (resentment, bitterness, frustration, etc.)
1. Notifies me that I need to define myself in a problematic situation in which I had not been respected,
  2. Forces me to let the problem go if I determine my anger was unfounded, or
  3. Use it to examine vulnerable feelings (pain, guilt, fear, jealousy, etc.) that the anger might be covering up.

THEN YOU DON'T NEED THE ANGER ANYMORE!  
IT HAS SERVED ITS PURPOSE...

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### Running Away from the Very Parts that will Free us up...



- The part of us that is carrying the pain has the capacity to carry the pain, that's why it's the part that is carrying it!

Stop being afraid of that part. It has something to teach us.  
It has the capacity to carry the pain we don't want to carry.  
We've just cut ourself off from a deeper aspect of self.  
"Yes, BUT..."  
"I don't want to stir things up." (self) ("Numb is good")  
"I don't like conflict." (others) ("Shallow relationships work.")

Code for:

- "I'm afraid of the part of me that hurts."
- "I don't know how to work through pain."
- "I'm afraid of your pain."
- "I don't want to learn how to do the work of forgiveness."

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### Letter Writing: Healing Soul Injuries®

The 7 Tasks of Living and Dying Healed:

- Forgive Me
- I Forgive You
- I Love You
- Thank You
- Good-bye
- Let Go
- Open Up



Include what you need to achieve healing.  
Nurture the broken aspect of self back home...

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### "I'm Sorry" is Incomplete

1. "I'm sorry."
2. "It was my fault."
3. "What can I do to make it right?"





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## Facilitating Forgiveness

- Don't minimize guilt and shame with well-intentioned platitudes
- Recognize that the aspect of self that was hurt has to do the work of forgiveness, *not the integrating self*. Otherwise, false forgiveness occurs.
- Respect timing, readiness, and rhythm
- Don't push or demand (just stay open to the possibility)
- Approach it differently at a later time.
- Recognize that the part of self holding the pain is large enough to hold it, because it is. Meet that part of self and gain her/his dimension.




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## What NOT to Say when others express guilt/shame...

- "That was a long time ago. Don't worry about that now."
- "You were doing the best you could with what you knew at the time."
- "You were just doing your duty as a good soldier."



### Why?

Encouraging them to bypass the work rather than learn the self-forgiveness process (owning what was done wrong, asking for forgiveness, atonement (at-one-ment)).

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## Overly Forgiving?

- Gets us off the hook of taking responsibility for feeling the hurt that was caused
- Keeps us from having a full self that needs to be respected.
- Keeps us from being TRUE peacemakers.
- Creates Enablers
- Overlooking is NOT forgiving
- Overlooking is not having the
- Betrays our own self... afraid of our own light.




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### Four Stages of Enabling

- Own and experience your need to rescue
- Give back to your beloved his/her humanity (Let go of exalting them to their best act which justifies your denial.)
- Give up your right to cover up and make up for their inadequacies
- Allow them to gain their own power and wisdom




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### Forgiveness is a Process

- Starts with a declaration of INTENTION
- Stay open to the possibility of its occurrence
- Anger → Grief → Letting go
- Let your Soul Self carry the pain
- Prayer
- Therapeutic Letter Writing
- Rituals




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### Collective Guilt & Forgiveness

Dear Family and Friends,  
 We thank you for standing by us after all that has happened.  
 We know we haven't been the best example  
   as a spouse or parent or child.  
 We are deeply sorry for not showing enough love,  
 for the abuse, for not being sensitive enough to you,  
 and not being able to trust you.  
 And for all this sacrifice, perhaps you will get us back -  
 willing to listen, with a new attitude,  
 and able to spend time with you and our dear children.  
 We look forward to the day when we can look in your eyes  
 and say "I love you" with feeling...instead of harshness,  
 tenderness...instead of isolation, communication. We love you  
 so very much.

*-Combat Veterans  
 West Haven VA Recovery Program*

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### Integrative Rituals: Access the Unconscious

#### Ceremonies of Change:

- \* Separation Stage: Identify the problem. Letting Go, Saying good-bye to "same"
- \* Transition Stage: Education to help with the confusion, uncertainty
- \* Incorporation Stage: Integration of new relationship with the world/others. Symbol of change.



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### A Gaping Wound in our Society: Unmourned Grief & Unforgiven Guilt



Soul Injury Restoration Ceremony: Sponsor One!  
Veterans & First Responders

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### Soul Restoration for Healthcare Providers



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### Out of the Mouths of Babes...

“If you want to learn to love better,  
you should start with a friend  
you hate.”



Nikka, age 6

Is it possible?

That we are judged by how we treat our enemies,  
not how we treat our friends???

Judge: We can evaluate the depth of our humility, honesty, and  
courage...

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### Contemplation

- What or who do I need to forgive? (Genes, people, body, job, God, death)
- If you died today, what would be left unsaid or undone?
- What issues have I fooled myself with “False forgiveness”?
- Self forgiveness? Why does its lack persist? What my payoff for not forgiving?
- How does enabling other people r/t avoiding my own needs?



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*I asked God to take away my pride, and God said, “No.”  
He said it was not for Him to take away, but for me to give up.  
I asked God to make my handicapped child whole, and God said, “No.”  
He said her spirit is whole, her body is only temporary.  
I asked God to grant me patience, and God said, “No.”  
He said that patience is a byproduct of tribulation. It isn’t granted,  
it’s earned.  
I asked God to give me happiness, and God said, “No.”  
He said he gives blessing. Happiness is up to me.  
I asked God to spare me pain, and God said, “No.”  
He said suffering draws me apart from worldly cares and brings me closer to  
Him.  
I asked God to make my spirit grow and God said, “No.”  
He said I must grow on my own, but He will prune me to make me fruitful.  
I asked God to help me love others as much as He loves me.  
And God said, “Ah, you finally have the idea.”  
(Claudia Minden Weisz)*

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Start a Book Circle!

Stay in Touch!

Start a Veteran Circle!



Leave your business card with me  
(or write email address on paper)!

Utilize our website: [www.OpusPeace.org](http://www.OpusPeace.org)  
(Tools, Blogs)

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