

CAN YOU FORGIVE AND FORGET?

In the last lesson, you examined ways to respond when things went wrong in your relationship. In this lesson, you'll learn about forgiveness and releasing the pain of past hurts.

CLEARING CONFUSION ABOUT FORGIVENESS

There are major misunderstandings about forgiveness. **Forgiveness is something you do for yourself, not the other person.**

A common comment about forgiveness is, “Why do I have to forgive them? They hurt me.” You forgive because **forgiveness is letting go of the pain and resentment from an emotional wound.**

Forgiveness does not mean you forget. You release the pain. The emotional charge disappears. When the charge is gone, the memory decreases. Have you had someone say, “Do you remember when...?” You hadn’t thought about until reminded because there was no emotional charge.

THE TWO SIDES OF FORGIVENESS

Just as there are two side to every story, there are two sides to forgiveness. **To forgive or not to forgive? That is the question.**

CONSIDER THESE EMOTIONAL AND PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF NOT FORGIVING:

1. **Emotional effects.** The emotional repercussions of holding onto the pain, anger and resentment of emotional wounds has been discussed for several thousand years.

- **The bitter and angry feelings can poison you emotionally.** You begin to push people away because they don't want to be with someone who is so angry.
- **Your anger towards one person can overflow to others.** Because a man hurt you, you believe all men will hurt you. If a woman hurt you, you believe all women will hurt you.
- **Your anger and resentment can result in believing you can't trust anyone.**
- **You might also not trust yourself.** You may wonder if you have the ability to choose partners or friends.

2. **Physical effects.** Your long-term physical health is also negatively affected by holding onto the pain of the past. Research in this area is a fairly new field of research. Much has been discovered about the effects of the mind upon the body.

- Anger, part of non-forgiveness, puts your body in a continual fight or flight response. **This means you are in a continual state of stress.**

- **Your immune system is weakened.** Your immune system is what fights off disease. People with a weakened immune system struggle more often with colds, flu, and other respiratory illnesses. Your immune system also fights off cancer.
- **Your digestive system doesn't work as well.** This results in poor digestion which prevents the absorption of nutrients. It also affects your ability to release waste materials.
- **Blood pressure can go up.** This increases the possibility of heart issues and strokes.
- **Sexual response decreases.** Lack of forgiveness can affect your desire for sex as well as men's ability to perform.

THE EMOTIONAL AND PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF FORGIVING ARE THE OPPOSITE OF ALL THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS:

1. **Stress is reduced dramatically.** Your immune system becomes stronger, blood pressure and digestion normalize, and sexual response returns.
2. **Joy returns.** You're more fun to be with, others are attracted to your happiness, and you feel lighter, more like *you*.

Being healthier and happier are excellent reasons to release the wounds of the past and move on with your life.

The question now is "How?"

EXERCISES TO ASSIST IN LETTING GO, ALSO KNOWN AS FORGIVENESS

In Lesson 6, we talked about writing a series of letters you won't mail. In this exercise you also write.

THIS FORGIVENESS EXERCISE IS A FOUR-DAY PROCESS:

1. **Day 1 - The first release.** Get pen, pencil, and paper (No computer unless you absolutely cannot hold a pen or pencil).
 - Write a letter to the person who hurt you. Say everything you want to say. Use whatever words you want. This is not a letter to be polite. This is a letter saying everything you wanted to say. When finished, put it somewhere until tomorrow.
2. **Day 2 - The second release.** Repeat the same process using the same letter you wrote in Day 1. Make the letter even stronger. Cross things out, underline, and add new words. Express as much of your anger and disappointment as you can. Put the letter away until tomorrow.
3. **Day 3 - The third release.** Repeat Day 2, making the letter even stronger. Put it away until tomorrow.
4. **Day 4 - The final release.** You'll need matches and something to burn your letter in.

- Read your letter out loud 3 times. Each time you read it, end with, “I release you and let you go.”
- Burn the letter and repeat, “I release you and let you go,” until the letter is in ashes.
- Throw the ashes into the air with, “I release you and let you go.”

SPIRITUAL RELEASE

This is a powerful process if you're spiritually oriented. It's based upon the concept that as you pray for someone you will be healed.

FOLLOW THESE STEPS FOR SPIRITUAL RELEASE:

1. **Preparation.** Obtain a picture of the person you want to forgive or write their name on a piece of paper. Place the picture or paper someplace where you'll see it regularly. If it's too difficult to look at the picture, turn it face down.
2. **Pray for blessings.** Each time you go by the

picture, place your hand on it and ask that they be blessed and filled with love. Continue to do this until you feel free of the pain.

Now that you know the tools, please use them. **You are worth being free of the pain!**

SUMMARY AND REFLECTION

Forgiveness is the releasing of the pain of the past. It is something you do for yourself, for your freedom. You deserve the peace and joy forgiveness brings to you.

In the next lesson, you'll discover ways to tell if you're ready for a lifetime commitment.

HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO DO TODAY

REFLECTION

1. Make a list of the people you're angry with.
2. Choose one of those on your list and make a commitment to begin one of the releasing processes.