

# The Importance of Forgiveness.

Father, Son, Ourselves.

# Forgive for Good:

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# Breath of Thanks - modified Heart Focus<sub>B</sub>

- **Bring your attention fully to your stomach as you slowly draw in and out two deep breaths**
- **As you inhale, allow the air to gently push your belly out**
- **As you exhale, consciously relax your belly so that it feels soft**
- **Say Thank You with each breath. Thanks for breath and life.**
- **After several full and deep inhalations, bring to your mind's eye an image of someone you love or of a beautiful scene in nature that fills you with awe and wonder**
- **Often people have a stronger response when they imagine their positive feelings centered in the area around your heart**
- **Continue this image for several minutes.**

**What is Forgiveness?**

**What is not Forgiveness?**

# What is Forgiveness?

Peace in the present moment.

For you.

Releasing our past to heal our present.

Even though wounded, choosing to hurt and suffer less.

Regaining power.

Healing.

Helping control feelings, improve mental & physical health.

Something everyone can learn.

A choice.

Becoming a hero instead of a victim.

# What is not Forgiveness?

Condoning unkindness.

Forgetting something painful that happened.

Excusing poor behavior.

Denying hurt.

Reconciling with the offender.

Giving up having feelings.

Not seeking justice.

Changing the past.

# Ourselves:

Write down something you believe you need to forgive.

# Creating a Grievance

3 Components:

- \*Exaggerated taking of a personal offense.
- \*Blaming the offender for how you feel.
- \*Creation of a grievance story.



# **Exaggerated taking of a personal offense.**

\*Something happened that we didn't want to happen.

\*It caused strong feelings.

\*We dwelled on it too long.

\*The feelings hurt our minds and bodies.

# Blaming the offender for how you feel.

Problem because when the cause of the hurt is outside ourselves we look for solutions outside ourselves.

- \*This is the worst hypothesis for why we hurt.
- \*Fight or Flight unable to tell if now or ten years ago.
- \*Stress chemicals damage us.
- \*We feel helpless.
- \*A victim.
- \*We give away our power.

# Creation of a grievance story.

- \*Our mind searches for past events to match our current mood of sadness, anger, hurt, betrayal, alienation.
- \*We lock in a negative way that the situation affects us.
- \*It feels true every time we tell it because familiar stress chemicals course through our bodies.
- \*The story keeps us in the past and alienates us from friends and family.

# Father, Sons, Ourselves:

What was the father's story of what happened?

What was the elder son's story of what happened?

What was the younger son's story of what happened?

What is your story of what happened?

What needs to be forgiven? Who needs to forgive? Why?

# Discussion ?s

What was/is there to forgive?

What was/is the grievance?

\*Exaggerated taking of a personal offense.

What are the feelings?

\*Blaming the offender for how you feel.

Who is the offender?

\*Creation of a grievance story.

What is the story?

# Is the story a grievance story?

Have you (or another):

- \*told the story more than twice to the same person?

- \*replayed the events more than two times a day in your mind?

- \*spoken to the person who hurt you even when they aren't there?

- \*committed to tell story without upset and then find self agitated?

- \*made the person who hurt you the central figure in the story?

# Is the story a grievance story?

Have You:

- \*been reminded of other painful things that hurt you when you tell the story?
- \*focused primarily on your pain and what you have lost?
- \*put a villain in your story?
- \*made a commitment to not tell your story again and then broken the vow?
- \*looked for other people with similar problems to tell your story to?
- \*kept your story the same over time?
- \*checked the details of your story for accuracy?

# Unenforceable Rules:

The thinking process that leads to grievances is the process of trying to enforce unenforceable rules.

This causes significant emotional pain and we have less energy to think about our options.

We state what we wish would happen.

An illusion of control.

Hope is different than wishes.

We can learn to change our rules.



**FORGIVENESS:** Is about amending the story.

3 preconditions:

\*Know what your feelings are about what happened.

\*Be clear about the action that wronged you.

\*Share your experience with at least 1 or 2 trusted people.

# The Science:

- \*Feeling positive emotions, such as gratitude, faith and compassion have a positive impact on the heart.
- \*People with a higher degree of spirituality live healthier and longer lives.
- \*Forgiveness is offered as a balm for hurt and anger in many major religions.
- \*When people think about someone they care about they experience improved HRV and immune function and more harmonized brain waves.

# More Science:

\*People who have higher degrees of blame suffer more from illness.

Blame emerges as an inability to manage hurt and anger.

\*Anger and hostility are harmful to the heart (even if only thought about for 5').

A type A person (workaholic or always in a hurry) does not pose a health risk when not accompanied by anger.

\*The relationship between forgiveness and the absence of health problems was stronger than the relationship between hostility and the incidence of health problems.

# Forgiveness Studies:

\*People who are taught to forgive become less angry, more hopeful, less depressed, less anxious. less stressed, more confident, more spiritual.

\*When students rehearsed a grudge their heart rate and BP went up. Muscle tension increased and they reported feeling uncomfortable and less in control.

\*When the students were asked to forgive, none of these things occurred.

\*Dr. Luskin: 1st studied People in Palo Alto (excluded victims of abuse/assault in past five years). Measured spiritual well being, hurt, anger, physical health, stress, optimism and forgiveness at beginning, end and 18 weeks later. Later, People from Ireland with severe losses were similarly studied.

# Forgive For Good:

Forgiveness = feeling the peace that emerges as you

- \*take a hurt less personally

  - (Challenging unenforceable rules).

- \*take responsibility for how you feel

  - (Techniques to manage feelings).

- \*become a hero instead of a victim in the story you tell

  - (Positive intention).

# Techniques to manage feelings:

## 2 situations:

1. Look for the good and beautiful in life.

\*Change the Channel. Remember what is good in our life.

Gratitude, Beauty, Forgiveness, Love Channels.

\*Practice: Breath of Thanks or Heart Focus to help change channels.

2. Maintain peace in any situation, no matter how upsetting.

\*Positive Emotion Reinforcement Tool.

PERT= brief Heart Focus +

ask peaceful part of you what you can do to resolve your difficulty.

# Techniques to Manage Feelings:

Gratitude

Beauty

Forgiveness

Love

Breath of Thanks.

PERT (Positive Emotion Refocusing Tech).

# Challenging Unenforceable Rules:

Turning events into wishes/hopes.

1. Recognize strong negative feelings from the past being experienced in the present (hurt, anger, depression, hopelessness).
2. Remind yourself you feel bad because you are trying to enforce an unenforceable rule.
3. Agree to challenge your unenforceable rule.
4. Ask: “What experiences in my life am I thinking of right now that I am demanding to be different?”
5. Change from demanding you get what you want to hoping you get it.
6. Notice that when you wish/hope things will be the way you want you think more clearly and feel more peaceful.



# Challenging Unenforceable Rules:

Write down:

“What experiences in my life am I thinking of right now that I am demanding to be different?”

# Creating a Positive Intention:

1. Find a quiet place to be undisturbed for 10'
2. Practice PERT to relax
3. Ask: What was my reason for being in the grievance situation in the first place? What was my positive long term goal/dream?
4. Think about your response in 1-2 sentences.
5. Promise yourself you will not tell the grievance story any longer.
6. Practice telling the positive intention story to trusted people.

# Sharing a Positive Intention Story

Spend a few minutes sharing with 1-2 people.

# The HEAL Method:

H = Hope.

E = Educate.

A = Affirm.

L = Long Term.

# H = Hope

The specific positive outcome you desired  
in the hurtful situation.

“I hoped for .....

# E = Educate

Educate self that each hope you have exists with the awareness that you may not get what you want.

There are limits to your control over others, yourself or life events.

“I understand and accept that.....”

# A = Affirm

Affirm your positive intention.

Embrace the life goals that our focus on a hurtful experience has shifted aside.

Alternatively, the positive intention may be that we can grow from any experience.

“My life goal is.....”

# L = Long Term Commitment

Long term commitment to your long-range well being.

“I make the long term commitment to follow my positive intention and use the HEAL method.”



# Guided Practice of HEAL Method:

At any time you feel hurt or anger over a grievance:

1. Bring your attention fully to your stomach as you slowly draw in and out two slow deep breaths.
2. On the third inhalation bring to your mind's eye/heart center an image of someone you love or a beautiful scene in nature that fills you with awe and peace.

# Guided HEAL Practice continued:

3. Reflect on what you would have preferred to happen in this specific situation. Make a *Hope* statement.
4. Then *Educate* yourself about the limitations in demanding things always work out the way you want.
5. *Affirm* your positive intention - the positive long term goal underneath the hope you had for this specific grievance.
6. Make a *Long-Term Commitment* to practice the HEAL method and follow your positive intention.