



Ascension

Ascension WI EAP

Forgiveness

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Perhaps one of the most difficult acts a person can do in their lifetime is to forgive. To forgive means something has happened in your life that merits forgiving. Worse yet is that these actions are often by the hands of someone we loved, someone we trusted -- someone we let into our lives for the betterment of us, not the destruction of us.



More than likely you have endured transgressions that warrant forgiveness, which result in feelings such as pain, hurt, embarrassment, anger, resentment, rejection, humiliation, or grief. Why would we want to forgive someone whose actions have caused us such pain? We don't! Andrea Brand, Marital and Family Therapist says "Forgiveness isn't something we do for the person who wronged us; it's something that you do for you."



When we are hurt we try to make sense of the situation. We want resolution, answers, and closure to these events. We play it over and over in our minds trying to make sense of it. Our minds take us through the twists and turns of a maze of uncertainty, seeking truth. The sad truth is that we can't always understand why things happen or why some people behave the way that they do. The only certainty we have is that continuing to speculate, guess, or assume as to why things happened will only lead to prolonged suffering.

Part of our tendency to overanalyze these situations involves internalizing things. We make it about ourselves -- something that we did wrong or something that we could have prevented. We blame ourselves, however; one of the keys to forgiveness is to externalize the situation. This is not to blame others for our

sorrow, but rather to seek out our own resolution.

Try this: think about an event that angered you. How did you feel about it? How did it affect you? Next, think about how this event changed you? Did you learn something about yourself? Did your priorities change? Did it make you stronger? Did you grow beyond your comfort zone? Third, think about the person who's behind that pain. Acknowledge that this person is flawed, as all of us are as human beings. Work to understand that their actions are based upon their own life experiences which may have involved misguided notions, faulty belief systems, or skewed perceptions. To understand this is not to say that it excuses their actions; rather it's a way to better understand what need this person was trying to fulfill and why they may have gone about it in such a hurtful way.

Once we've been able to identify, understand, feel and then release emotions associated with the suffering, then we are well on our way through the process of forgiveness.



It's important to remember that forgiveness is a process much like grief. It ebbs and flows; one moment may not feel like the next. In those

weaker moments, it can be helpful to focus on your strengths, reach out to a friend, show compassion by helping another in need, make a list of your positive attributes, meditate, talk to others about forgiveness, recall a time when you've needed forgiving, or focus on your blessings.



Forgiveness takes practice. When you find yourself overcome with those nasty emotions, remind yourself that every feeling, good or bad, is temporary and will pass. Be strong in that moment and practice overall kindness with yourself.

For free and confidential hope and help in forgiving others, or any personal or workplace concern, contact Ascension WI EAP today!
