

How to Forgive Yourself

Forgiving yourself can be much harder than forgiving someone else. When you're carrying around a sense of blame for something that has happened in the past, this bundle of negativity burrowing deep into yourself can cause a never-ending, pervasive sense of unhappiness. Forgiving yourself is an important act of moving forward and releasing yourself from the past. It's also a way of protecting your health and general well-being. Here are some suggestions on how to forgive yourself.

Steps

- 1. Practice Self-Acceptance.** You don't need forgiveness for being you. Forgiving yourself is about targeting the specific things that you feel bad about, not about the person you are. As a forgiveness technique, self-acceptance allows you to acknowledge that you're a good person, faults and all. It doesn't mean that you ignore the faults or stop trying to improve yourself but it does mean that you value yourself above those elements and cease to allow your faults to halt your progression in Life.
 - Love yourself and give yourself permission to heal.
 - Laugh more; it will give you more freedom to stop taking it all so seriously.
- 2. Understand The Importance Of Forgiveness.** Living in a state of being unable to forgive requires a lot of energy. You are constantly chewed up by fear of your vulnerability, burning with anger with the source of pain, and living with the constancy of sadness, hurt, and blame. This energy deserves to be put to better use, so that your creativity and abilities are fed, not your negativity. Forgiveness also allows you to live in the present instead of the past, which means that you can move into the future with a renewed sense of purpose focused on change, improvement, and building on experience rather than being held back by past hurts.
 - Some people are afraid to forgive themselves because they fear losing their sense of self that has been built on the back of anger, resentment, and vulnerability. In this case, ask yourself if that angry, easily hurt and reactive person is the identity you're keen to show the world and live with. Is the security of this mode of thinking worth the effort and harm it is causing you? It's better to have a small time of insecurity as you find your way again than to continue a lifetime bogged down in anger.
 - See forgiveness in a positive light. If you're bothered that forgiving suggests that you shouldn't experience strong feelings such as resentment and anger, try viewing it as the chance to feel strong positive feelings, such as joy, generosity, and faith in yourself. Switching it to thinking about what you'd gain rather than what you'd lose has the benefit of keeping you positive while minimizing the negative emotions.

3. **Take Into Account The Challenges Raised By Not Forgiving Yourself.** Not only do you allow yourself to remain stuck in the past, but not forgiving yourself takes a huge toll on your emotional and physical health. Inability to forgive is sourced from anger and resentment, two emotions that can wreak havoc with your health. Numerous studies have shown that people stuck in constant anger are more prone to disease and illness than people who can learn to forgive both themselves and others.
 - *Always remember that forgiving doesn't equate with forgetting. You're entitled to learn by experience and be guided by that experience. It's about leaving aside the resentment and self-inflicted berating that comes with remembering.*
4. **Accept Your Emotions.** Part of the struggle is often being unable to accept that you are experiencing such emotions as anger, fear, resentment, and vulnerability. Instead of trying to avoid facing these negative emotions, accept them as part of what is fueling your lack of self-forgiveness. A problem named is a problem ready to be tackled.
5. **Reflect on Why You're Trying to Hold Yourself to a Higher Standard than Anyone Else around You.** Perfectionism can cause you to hold too high a standard for your own behavior, a standard that you wouldn't hold anyone else to. And if your perfectionism causes you to be too hard on yourself, you are caught in a situation where self-forgiveness is very hard to do because it seems like acceptance of a substandard you. Remove yourself from this vicious cycle of thinking by doing what Martha Beck called "*welcoming imperfection*". Beck claimed that "*welcoming imperfection is the way to accomplish what perfectionism promises but never delivers.*" It allows you to accept that all human beings are imperfect, and you are human, and imperfect too.
 - If you are really struggling with perfectionism, consider counseling or therapy work to reduce its impact in your life. Read *How to control perfectionism* for more tips.
6. **Let Go of Other People's Expectations for You.** If you're stuck in a spiral of self-hate and never feeling good enough because of things that were once said to you, self-forgiveness is essential. You have no control over what other people do and say, and *many things are said and done unconsciously, often motivated by the other person's own shortcomings*. Living your life in self-loathing because you don't feel you lived up to someone else's expectations is based on making too much of another person's mixed-up feelings. *Forgive yourself for trying to live a life according to other's expectations and start making the changes needed to follow your own purpose instead.*
 - For every person who has been hard on you, remember that someone was hard on them. Break the chain of harshness by being kind to yourself, not trying to live up to someone else's expectations for you.
 - Whenever someone criticizes you unfairly, realize that they have just made it that much harder for themselves if they make a mistake or fail to fulfill their own perfectionist ideas. Take this moment to remember where you've come from and why you no longer want to live that way.

7. **Stop Punishing Yourself.** There is a frequent misunderstanding that forgiveness equates to forgetting or condoning. This misunderstanding can lead a person to feel that it is not right to forgive oneself because in the process of doing so, it's akin to an act of forgetting or condoning the past wrong. If this is the factor preventing you from forgiving yourself, keep in mind that forgiveness is a process of mindfulness in which you continue to remember what happened and you do not condone something that was "wrong" as suddenly "right".
- It's perfectly fine to say: "I am not proud of what I've done (or how I've devalued myself) but I'm moving on for the sake of my health, my well-being, and those around me." Affirming this is healthy and allows you to break the cycle of self-harm you've fallen into because you openly acknowledge what was wrong and the intention to set it right from now on.
8. **Think About What Will Improve In Your Life If You Can Release Yourself and How To Bring This Into Fruition.** As part of forgiving yourself, it's usually not enough to simply resolve to forgive yourself. Doing things to confirm the forgiveness process will help you to realize your self-forgiveness and to give you a new sense of purpose. Some of the things you might like to consider doing include:
- **Taking up meditation.** Meditation is an ideal way to find inner quiet, spiritual, self-realization, and physical relaxation. It will allow you to take time out, to tune into and appreciate the moment, and to get in touch with your inner self. Done regularly, meditation will improve your well-being and sense of self.
 - **Affirm your self-worth.** Remind yourself regularly that you are a valued and beautiful person and say simply: "I forgive myself" or "I will no longer let anger eat away at me", whenever the negative thoughts reappear.
 - **Keep a diary.** Write down your journey to forgiveness. Having the writing space to share your thoughts and feelings with, one that nobody else will ever read, is a liberating and self-enlightening way to breaking through negative approaches to your life.
 - **Seek therapy.** If you've tried hard to get over anger, resentment, and other fearful, out-of-control emotions but you're still struggling, connect with a therapist who can help guide you through to a better state of being. If therapy's not your thing, at least find one friend or more to talk to, and who will help to affirm your worth.
 - If you have a faith, draw strength from its teachings to support you.
9. **See Forgiveness As A Journey, Not A Destination.** If you're liable to thinking that you're unable to "get to" self-forgiveness, you may be sabotaging your chances of even starting the forgiveness journey. It helps to accept that forgiveness is an ongoing process and that you'll have your up days and your down days, as with most feelings and experiences in life. You may feel that you've reached a point of forgiveness, only to have something happen that causes you to feel it was all a wasted effort and that you're back to square one, angry and annoyed with yourself. The best approach is to let the slip-ups happen and see them as

minor setbacks in an otherwise more forgiving self. In addition, realize that forgiveness has no timetable; instead, you can do your very best to prepare yourself for the process and to get it started.

- Self-forgive in gradual stages. Start with valuing yourself and making a resolution to stop letting the past continue to haunt the present and direct the person you are now.
- Learn from what you've done in the past but value your whole self (see step 1 above on practicing self-acceptance).
- Enjoy positive experiences consciously and don't seek to downgrade them.
- Be grateful for what you do have — great relationships, a home, a family, an education, abilities, interests, hobbies, pets, health, etc. Look for the good in your life.
- Be self-compassionate. Shift your thoughts to more fulfilling, value-focused things when negative reproaches arise.
- Apologize if others have been involved and you have not already done so, or you have not done so genuinely. Only do this when you have changed your negative outlook and if doing so will not harm that person.

Tips

- *The more stress you hold inside of you, the more damage you do to yourself.* Stress can sometimes lead you to releasing your anger out and harm yourself and others around you, but if you forgive yourself the anger will be gone and the bad stuff will be gone. The result is that you are more concentrated and better about the positive instead of the negative.
- *Whenever You Feel Guilt*, follow the Words of Les Brown, "*Forgive Yourself for Your Faults and Mistakes and Move On*," This will help you whenever you make a mistake.
- *Think About How You Have Forgiven Others In The Past.* Take the lessons from these experiences and apply them to your own situation; the reassuring aspect of this is that you know you have the ability to forgive; you just need to point that forgiveness in the right direction.
- *Your Past Mistakes Most Likely Made You Who You Are Today.* So don't look at them as mistakes. Look at them as guides or lessons.
- *Your Mistakes Do Not Define You.* Trust that you are a great person. Think about all the horrendous mistakes normal/good people have done and learned from. Your mistakes aren't even as bad!
- *Forgiving Yourself And Others Does Not Mean That The Past Is Forgotten.* It means to forgive; however, the memory does remain. This is the same as the cycle of grief.

- *Life Goes On So Forgive And Go On With Life.*
- *Get A Stress Toy/Tool (squeeze foam ball etc.)* When you start to feel guilty, play with your work with your toy/tool.
- *The Person We Are, Is The Result Of Both Positive And Negative Things Happening To Us In Life, As Well As The Positive And Negative Things We Have Done.* The manner in which we respond to negative events is as important as the way in which we respond to positive events. A person who is inclined to ruminate and make large of a negative event will be more prone to living in anger and resentment and expect future negativity than a person who sees negative things as isolated incidents that don't impinge on who they are as a whole.