

Living with Forgiveness 101

The Case for Forgiveness – it's not just about the other person

I don't know anyone who has not experienced hurt in their lives. Truthfully, a huge majority are still holding some kind of bitterness or resentment.

That is not acceptable and is not the path towards peace.

When we FEEL hurt, anger, frustrated, bitter and we don't adequately deal with that pain, those FEELINGS stick with us. We might try to ignore them. We might try to tuck them away in a little box somewhere to be dealt with later. We might try to self-medicate and numb the pain. And some of us erect huge walls around ourselves so no one else will cause us that kind of pain again.

There is nothing like the pain caused by someone you trust and are in an intimate relationship with. Do you remember the movie **Love Story**? Jenny's famous line that "Love means never having to say you're sorry?" If you don't remember it, click here for a little trip down memory lane:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B5-8_1uCzR8

This one scene was disastrous for relationships and left many people feeling like something was wrong with them. Why wasn't "love" enough? Why did we NEED, or feel like we needed, an apology?

What is wrong with being sorry? What is wrong with striving to do better in the future? I have worked with couples for years and I always ask successful ones "what is your secret?" Many say "forgiving often!"

Love means admitting your mistakes **PLUS**

There is nothing wrong with an apology.

However, an **APOLOGY IS NOT ENOUGH**, you need **the PLUS**.

Was there a time in your life where you wished someone apologized and they never did? Describe what happened. Did you ask them to apologize? How did it make you feel? Did the issue keep coming up between you?



People often keep bringing up past issues because the issue was never fully dealt with in the relationship. Once an apology is made, and accepted, the couple can really move on.

What does an **apology plus** look like?

Apology Plus 101:

1. I am sorry for _____ name what happened.
2. Take responsibility for your actions: Be specific about what you did and admit: I know it hurt you and you felt _____ acknowledging the incident as well as the pain the other person felt is a great validator.
3. You did not deserve that. What can I do to make this up to you?
4. I promise that next time this comes up I will _____ / or / in the future, I will do _____ instead.
5. Then follow through. This is the most important piece, because otherwise it will come up over and over again and this will be an ongoing, continual hurt and argument that over time erodes the relationship.
6. And please, don't justify your behavior, defend it, blame it on the other person, minimize the harm, or use the spiritual double talk non-apology of "I'm sorry you are upset."

Have you ever received an apology that you knew was not real? How did it make you feel? Now imagine that apology was given following the parameters above? Can you imagine how different that would feel?

You might also remember a time when an apology felt empty, because you've heard it all before and changes were never made. The 5th step in the sample apology above is vital in long term relationships. Integrity, follow-through, trying to keep your word is a must for trust to develop, forgiveness to heal, and for people to move on after intimate relationship hurts.

In the last lesson, we learned that forgiveness does not mean forgetting. If you do have a quality relationship, a healthy apology can close the issue. In other words,



it won't come up over and over again, because it's healed. No one has forgotten it, but thankfully, no one is living as though the event or issue is continually rearing its ugly head.



We need forgiveness.

Do you remember a time in your life when someone acknowledged that what they did or said hurt you? Did you feel validated by that acknowledgment? Was it easier to forgive or let go because you received that acknowledgment?

In addition to our spiritual and emotional healing, **forgiveness provides physical healing.**

The popular research in the field¹ tells us that unforgiveness, the holding on to grudges, hurt, anger, bitterness, resentment, as well as guilt and shame, causes long-term chronic stress. This chronic stress prompts your body to go into what we commonly call fight/flight response. This causes high levels of the hormones adrenaline and cortisol to rise in your body. When your body reacts as though it's in fight/flight mode, it cuts off all non-essential functions, such as digestion, immunity, and basically wreaks havoc on your health!

The forgiveness research from the last two decades notes that for many holding onto long-term resentment, bitterness, or shame, the symptoms of illnesses seem to diminish after forgiveness. This is primarily because the immune system gets

¹ For more specific research see [Forgiveness: Heal Your Past and Find the Peace You Deserve](#) by Lori S. Rubenstein (Sacred Life Publishers 2012)



back to work, functions the way it was originally designed, and the body begins the process of healing.

This is an overly exaggeratedly simplistic description of the scientific findings of forgiveness, stress, and healing.² Of course, there are numerous examples of miraculous healings and inner-peace brought on by forgiveness documented in the spiritual and philosophical realm.

Not only do we need forgiveness, but the world needs forgiveness.

Here is a YouTube video I would like you to watch. It is of Gary Ridgeway, known as the Green River Killer, a serial rapist and mass murderer. During the sentencing phase of his trial, something changes. Watch closely. Notice that when 1 person started talking about forgiveness, rather than spewing hatred, how he was moved. This one minute speaks volumes about forgiveness – I'd like you to watch:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w00eRFe-xQA>

While I will say forgiveness is for you...you can SEE and FEEL how it literally could heal the world, if a man who killed over 70 women was moved by forgiveness.

Can forgiveness bring about world peace?

Can forgiving and letting go of vengeance one person at a time brings about peace?

Let me know what YOU think.

² For more on the stress response go to this [Dartmouth Journal of Science Article](#)

