

## **Self-Forgiveness Information Plus Worksheets**

Self-Forgiveness: How to do it? (Original Blog Published 13/04/2020)

It can be very confusing, to say the least, when we are told we have to forgive others, and let them go, in order to move forward with our lives in a positive way. Our natural instinct is to want to get our own back, or at the very least see the other person punished for the wrong doing. That doesn't always happen!

**(Heads up this is a long blog and may cause triggers.)**

This kind of reaction is only natural and justified at times, as some things are unforgiveable. Yes they are unforgiveable and because of that we find ourselves still trapped by them. The reactions we have do hold us to the past. We give the past power that can be otherwise better spent on healing ourselves.

I will never ask anyone to forgive someone that is their personal choice. But what we fail to realise is that we can work on forgiveness and find peace with the past and it doesn't have anything to do with the other person.

Let me say from the start that I believe forgiveness of yourself is at the heart of your serenity and moving on with our lives. We sometimes forget that we do have to forgive ourselves too. It is usually our lack of self-forgiveness that holds us to the past, to our guilt and shame. Added to that, the fear we may still have of the other person, even if they are long gone, will also keep us trapped.

We need to deal with all of these issues as part of self-forgiveness and let them go, along with the past. That is a lot of hard courageous work and may require professional support, so please reach out if you need to.

### **Forgiveness V's Reconciliation.**

We often confuse forgiveness with reconciliation. This confusion is one reason why we get so hung up when it comes to forgiveness. If we can separate the two, then we find we are able to tackle forgiveness much more readily.

Firstly, forgiveness is not reconciliation, as this would require at least two people to be involved. And it would require a sincere apology from the other person.

Secondly, forgiveness only requires you and you alone. It requires you to forgive yourself first, and foremost. Only then if we chose we can move to reconciliation and then the other person secondly.

It should be noted that when we do forgive ourselves that is often enough to enable us to let go of the past and move on. Letting go doesn't mean we have to forget by the way, it just means we have found our peace with the past.

## **Why we struggle with forgiveness?**

Forgiveness is an extremely hard thing to do because we make it so for ourselves. That can be hard to hear. We often forget to forgive ourselves first and as I said we concentrate solely on the other person(s) involvement.

We can get hung up in our anger, guilt, shame, etc., so much so, that we fail to move on to forgiveness at all. In other words, we are so caught up in a negative cycle in our heads that keeps ourselves trapped in the past. What happened is gone, we are the ones keeping it alive and kicking us in the here and now.

Why do we allow ourselves to get caught up in anger, or in any emotion for that matter? It can be part of the pattern we have built up as a result of our life experiences. We simply don't realize that we have to recognize how we feel, learn to accept these feelings and where we are right now, before we can move on or take action.

We may have to ask for help if we recognize that we are caught up in these emotions. It will take courage to ask for help, I understand that. But we will move on much faster and have support while you do it if we have asked for professional help.

### **Other reasons we struggle can include:**

1. We are scared that forgiveness justifies the pain that was caused. It does not.
2. We are not ready to grieve the experience. Letting it go requires us to grieve it out first.
3. We are worried that by forgiving we make ourselves more vulnerable to being hurt again. We won't.
4. We believe that forgiveness is the same as reconciliation. It is not, see above.
5. We are scared to face and process our emotions in regard to what happened. Very understandable but if you are having trouble here again I recommend a local therapist they will help you with this process.
6. By refusing to forgive, we maintain a false sense of control over the experience/person. We may even feel very comfortable being the victim, you might not want to hear that, but it can be true. Being the victim has become a comfort zone and part of our identity. We have to be willing to disregard this identity and become a survivor and eventually a thriver.
7. We are not ready to change the relationship we have with our past.

## **Working On Forgiving Ourselves First Is Key.**

### **Always remember to start small and build from there.**

Taking too big a step in the first instance may not be as helpful as we thought. We don't want to create, or change, anything too fast as we can frighten ourselves into quitting too soon.

Some of these suggestions may seem strange to you at first, you may ask what has any of these got to do with forgiving yourself? But we need to create a more supportive, nurturing, and loving environment for ourselves in order to grow into self-forgiveness and these first steps will enable us to do that.

### **1 Take back Your Power.**

No matter what happened to us at that time our power was taken from us. So now we have to decide to **take back our power**. We get to decide what we want. That is our first boundary setting exercise.

**Do we want serenity that comes from forgiving ourselves enough to let go of the past?** This can be such a hard, and extremely large, question to ask ourselves.

As I've said our past painful experiences may be so tied into our identity that we may find it hard to put those experiences in the past where they belong. So it may be no wonder we have shied away from even asking the question and doing the hard work involved.

Take some time to journal about what you want from this work as well. What is your why? Who are you really doing this for? Make sure it is for yourself and not someone else. There may be times when you may lose motivation to continue. So having a clear picture of your why will keep you going in those times.

### **2 Make sure you are looking after yourself.**

Yes I am talking about [self-care](#) here. A lot of time we lose this because of what has happened to us and it also affects how we interact with ourselves now. We feel we don't deserve and we are not good enough. So [setting another boundary](#) here is an important step in taking back our power.

We are drawing a line in the sand and saying enough is enough. We are willing to take small baby steps in self-care. We are saying to the world and to ourselves, more importantly, is "I matter, I am good enough, I deserve my own love and in order to that I will take care of myself".

Every time we tick off one item on our [daily basic self-care list](#) we are now (1) setting a new boundary, [with ourselves](#) and [with others](#), and (2) we are affirming we are good enough, we deserve our own time, love, nurturing and support.

### 3 Review what is going on in your life right now.

This will help you set another boundary and enable you to take back control of what is going on in the present.

- Write down everything you do over the course of a week. I mean everything, even the small little things that we sometimes forget.
- Now review this list. Beside everything you have written down decide if you can: Delete it (yes you can stop doing things that don't serve you). Hand it back to the person really responsible for it (yes you can do this, they are adults and quite capable of doing it for themselves). Delegate (Partners, children/teens are very able to help out at home too, you don't need to do everything for them).
- The remaining items on your list should be more manageable and really your responsibility.

#### A word of caution here:

(1) Review this list at least every 6 months if not every month please. We can add back in things we had deleted or delegated so easily, especially if others are use to us doing things for us.

(2) Any time you free up is for you and you alone, it is not to be used to help others or take on more responsibilities. Remember you are now setting new boundaries with those in your life.

If you find delegating, handing it back or deleting difficult, then take the smallest items (time wise) and start with these. You can find a [free resource here](#) to help you with this exercise. The more you practice doing this the easier it becomes. Keep going you can do this for yourself!

### 4 Set Healthy Boundaries

That brings me to **setting healthy boundaries with negative people**. Often times when we are still caught up with past trauma we will not set healthy boundaries with others in the present. It may not be the same as it was in the past, but we will still meet negative, toxic, people who violate our boundaries today. They will continue until we eliminate them from our lives.

Remember you are taking back your power with all these activities and nurturing yourself in the process. I've spoken in detail about [how to deal with](#), and [delete](#), negative people, so please check out these blog posts and videos.

Again it may not be the easiest of jobs to start, but by taking the easiest people first we gain practice and our self-confidence in setting this boundary. We can then move on to more difficult or toxic negative people that inhabit our lives.

## **5 Look at how we communicate with ourselves and others now.**

“Speak to me with respect or be contained by my new healthy boundaries” can be a new phrase to adopt. Are you using your “I” statements? Are you really communicating what you want, need or desire? If not, why not? Be honest with yourself here. Raising your awareness and simply accepting [how you communicate with others](#) is the first two steps to changing your skills here.

[Journaling](#) our responses to the above questions can be very enlightening. We can have different methods of communication with different people in our lives also. Or we may use one method of communication in work situations but quite a different one in our personal lives. Listing out the people we interact with, and how we communicate with each of them, will help us to begin to see your patterns here.

I’m not just talking about what we say out loud either, but what our inner dialogue tells us much, especially about our past experiences. Look at your [negative thinking here](#) and start to track it. You can find out more in this blog post about [deleting negative thinking](#) and a free worksheet [here](#).

Our body language can do this too. How we dress, (not what you wear, but is it the best we can do for today?), how we hold our bodies can be quite revealing to ourselves. When we dress the best we can that day it can give us some quiet inner confidence. It doesn’t have to be the latest fashion, but it makes us comfortable and that gives us confidence.

How we hold our bodies also reveals a lot, simply holding our chins up and getting our eyes looking forward is empowering (it is also part of a reclaiming our bodies exercise that is used in trauma healing). Often we can be quite unaware that we are walking around looking at the ground or that we avert our eyes when we see someone approach us.

## **6 Review your emotional health.**

What are your emotions/feelings doing to your life now? What is going on in your head, heart, gut and soul? It’s all interconnected. So what is going on in our heads, how and what we are thinking will dictate our behaviours and emotions/feelings.

### **Journal out these questions to review your emotional health:**

- What emotions are dictating how you live your life? If you’re feeling stuck examine one area of your life at a time.
- What are your beliefs about this area of your life?
- Is there a particular event/thing that happened to make you feel this way or have this belief?
- Are there emotional experiences that contribute to this belief?

- Are you making assumptions about this area of your life?
- Determine what you are gaining from this belief?
- Ask yourself: Have you ever gone against this belief?
- Really pull this belief apart, look for evidence for and against this belief and decide whether you will keep or discard it now.
- Now think about what your future would be like without this belief.
- You can also do this exercise with positive beliefs, so you can build the [positivity](#) around this belief further.

Forgiveness also means letting go of our shame and guilt surrounding failing to protect ourselves at the time. Shame can be particularly difficult to let go of, I've talk about letting it and guilt go in this [blog post](#). But if you feel you are caught up in these, or any emotion, then I have to stress that getting professional help is the quickest way you can help yourself move forward here.

### **7 Build your positives.**

When we lose ourselves or get caught up in negativity we forget that we do have some positives in our lives. It can in fact be frightening to realise we have happiness in our lives and I talk more about happiness as an emotion [here](#).

- Write down 10 things you're grateful in your life everyday today. You might need to fake it till you make it to start with but you will quickly realize everything you are grateful for.
- Be as specific as you can be.
- Write down one way how you practice gratitude. If you don't practice gratitude already begin today.
- Gratitude is the fastest way to boost your mental health. ([You can read more here](#))

### **8 As I said remember to start with the smaller stuff, especially with this section.**

By now, if you have started to work through the above steps, you will have gained back some of your power, feel more secure, loved (by self at least) and nurtured. It's now time to look at what happened and why/what you need to forgive.

Remember this is about you forgiving you; we are not involving others in this. That is for a later choice.

**Take your time here and write down everyone that has hurt you in your life.**

Even in a small way but you know you haven't let it go. I'm talking about the ones

you haven't forgiven yet. If you're holding onto your anger, shame, fear, guilt, or you know you haven't grieved out the event or situation, then I'd say you have people you haven't forgiven yet in your life.

1. Write down that list; include yourself at the top of it!
2. Write down what they did, or what you did, that you can't let go of.
3. Now re-read it, is there anyone/thing/event on that list you can forgive immediately? This list gives you a clue as to why these people, events, and your own thoughts, still hold sway over you, even in the slightest manner. Use that information to work on letting go of the past and forgive you.
4. You have to ask yourself:
  - What do I want and need exactly from this person?
  - Is it an apology?
  - If so how long are you prepared to put your life on hold waiting for something you have no control over?
  - Do we need them to know how we feel, even after all this time?
5. Write a letter to this person; tell them how you feel, what has happened to you as a result of their actions. Really write it all down, get out as much as possible. This letter is not for sending.
6. Now burn the letter and visualize letting that person go. You are not forgiving them you are releasing them from holding you in the past. You may need to do this exercise of letter writing and burning a few times in order to feel the benefit.
7. Now write a letter to yourself, be honest with yourself, explain how you did the best you could under the circumstances and place the blame back with the real villain here. Be loving and kind, you are forgiving yourself here not adding to your burden. Remember to tell yourself of all the positives you have gained in your life too, it's a good reminder to have that even out of what may seem darkness there can come some light and good (see step 7 above).

### **Please Note**

Some of these people may be dead, you may not know what has happened to them, and they could be long gone from your life. But knowing what you want and need from them is going to be a big clue to giving that to yourself now. By that I mean even by acknowledging what was done to us, how we feel about it and telling them what they did will allow us to receive some peace in this situation.

Remember too these types of people have a very difficult time loving themselves and they aren't capable of loving someone else too. So don't wait too long with your decision to move forward with your life.

If you are finding any of this hard then I would strongly advise you to seek therapy with the specific idea of forgiving yourself. Bring the list to your therapist and work through it with them. Remember you are looking to forgive not reconcile with any of these people, except yourself of course!

You can get through this. You can move on with your life and find forgiveness, serenity, peace and love again.

### **My Book And Free Support Group For Mums.**

Did you know I talk more about working on forgiveness, shame, guilt, boundaries plus more topics in **my book and workbook The Building Blocks Of Self-Care?** You can purchase it [here](#).

If you're a **stressed mum** looking for simple strategies to overcome your anxiety – even if you struggle to find time for yourself, then I'd love to invite you to join my Facebook group, Less Stressed, More Success For Mums. We have regular facebook lives & Q & A sessions each week, plus lots of quick stress reducing techniques you can try immediately. Click [here](#) to join.

**If you are in an [abusive relationship](#) please seek support:**

### **Ireland Supports For Domestic Violence**

Women's Aid 1800 341 900

Men's Aid 01 554 3811

LGBTQ+ 1890 929 539

Childline 1800 666 666 TXT 50101

Samaritans 116 123

### **UK Supports For Domestic Violence**

National Domestic Violence Helpline 0808 2000 247

Refuge 0808 2000 247

Men's Advice Line, for male DV survivors 0808 801 0327

The Mix, info & support under 25s 0808 808 4994

National LGBTQ+ DV 0800 999 5428

Samaritans 116 123



**Looking At Your Struggle To Self-Forgiveness**

Re-read the sections on reasons why we struggle to forgive above and try to identify your reason.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write their response to the prompt above.

## 1 Taking Back Your Power

**Why do you want to find serenity through self-forgiveness?**

**What is your why in all of this?**

**Who are you really doing this for?**

**2 Looking After Yourself**  
**Your Basic Self-Care Checklist**

Sleep 8 hours every night or near enough

Regular Shower/Bath

Dress the best you can everyday

Eat 3 regular meals daily or 5/6 smaller ones if this suits you better

Take a (minimum) daily 10 minute walk or exercise of your choice

Meditate & Relax

Journal Inc. Gratitude list.(for now use the Brain Dump sheet below)

Drink 8 Glasses of Water

Cut Caffeine by noon or mid-afternoon at the latest

Other Things I Need To Do For Myself.

### 3 Review What Is Going On In My Life Right Now

List Everything You Currently Do In the First Column.

Now Review It: Do I Need To Delegate/Delete/Hand Back/My Responsibility.

It may take you a week to complete this list as you might not realize everything you actually do on a daily basis if you are very busy.

Current To Do List	Delete	Delegate It To Whom?	Hand Back To Whom?	My Responsibility

### 4 Setting Healthy Boundaries With Negative People 1 of 2

List everyone in your life in the first column

Are they Negative or Positive/. Mark N or P in second column

If Negative: decide can you delete them immediately or do you need to minimize contact first?

Review the blog/video on Dealing with negative people [here](#).

Person	N/P	Delete	Minimize Contact

<b>4 Setting Healthy Boundaries With Negative People 2 of 2</b>	
What strategies will you use to minimize contact with the person?	
Person	Strategies I Will Use.

**5 How Do I Communicate? 1 of 2**

How do I ask for what I need/want/desire.

Review the blog/video Improving Communication In Relationships [here](#).

**What are my needs/wants/desires?**

**How am I currently asking to have those met?**

**How can I ask for these in the future?**

**Any "I" statements I need to remember.**

**5 How Do I Communicate? 2 of 2**

**How do I use my body language to communicate with others?**

**Notes:**

**See also: Thought Traps Patterns Information Sheet & Automatic Thoughts Challenger Worksheets On [My Resource Page](#)**



**6 Review “My Emotional Health”**

**1. What emotions are dictating how you live your life? If you're feeling stuck examine one area of your life at a time.**

**2. What are your beliefs about this area of your life?**

**3. Is there a particular event/thing that happened to make you feel this way or have this belief?**

**4. Are there emotional experiences that contribute to this belief?**

**5. Are you making assumptions about this area of your life?**

**6. Determine what you are gaining from this belief?**

**7. Ask yourself: Have you ever gone against this belief?**

**8. Really pull this belief apart, look for evidence for and against this belief and decide whether you will keep or discard it now.**

**9. Now think about what your future would be like without this belief.**

**You can also do this exercise with positive beliefs, so you can build the [positivity](#) around this belief further.**

**7 Build Your Positives.**

Record everything you can think of on a daily basis that you are grateful for. Minimum of 3 things.

You may have to fake it till you make it the start.

But with practice you will realize how much you already have in your life to be positive about.

1.

2.

3.

## 8 Who are you not forgiving & why?

1. Write down that list; include yourself at the top of it!
2. Write down what they did, or what you did, that you can't let go of.
3. Now re-read it, is there anyone/thing/event on that list you can forgive immediately? This list gives you a clue as to why these people, events, and your own thoughts, still hold sway over you, even in the slightest manner. Use that information to work on letting go of the past and forgive you.
4. You have to ask yourself:
  - What do I want and need exactly from this person?
  - Is it an apology?
  - If so how long are you prepared to put your life on hold waiting for something you have no control over?
  - Do we need them to know how we feel, even after all this time?
5. Write a letter to this person; tell them how you feel, what has happened to you as a result of their actions. Really write it all down, get out as much as possible. This letter is not for sending.
6. Now burn the letter and visualize letting that person go. You are not forgiving them you are releasing them from holding you in the past. You may need to do this exercise of letter writing and burning a few times in order to feel the benefit.
7. Now write a letter to yourself, be honest with yourself, explain how you did the best you could under the circumstances and place the blame back with the real villain here. Be loving and kind, you are forgiving yourself here not adding to your burden. Remember to tell yourself of all the positives you have gained in your life too, it's a good reminder to have that even out of what may seem darkness there can come some light and good (see step 7 above).

**See sheets below**

**Notes:**

**1 & 2 List of people & what they did. 3. Review the list & events can I forgive these immediately? Yes or No?**

**Person/What They Did**

**Y/N**

<b>4. For each person you said no to ask yourself these questions.</b>
<b>1. What do I want and need exactly from this person?</b>
<b>2. Is it an apology?</b>
<b>3. If so how long are you prepared to put your life on hold waiting for something you have no control over?</b>
<b>4. Do we need them to know how we feel, even after all this time?</b>

**5. Letter To The Person**

**6. Don't forget to burn this letter!**



**7. Letter To Myself**

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