

LESSON 5

What Forgiveness Is Not

The emotions, thoughts, beliefs, and chemical nature of your body make it difficult to release the past, to forgive. The memory of what happened will be with you. **The key to healing is releasing the anger and resentment surrounding the event.**

Even for the deepest of wounds, it's crucial to find a way to detach as much as possible from the pain. In most cases this means to move into a state of forgiveness of the one who caused the wound.

Many people are resistant to forgiveness because they don't understand what forgiveness is. Before you explore what forgiveness is, let's look at what it isn't.

WHAT FORGIVENESS IS NOT

If you're told that you must forgive someone to release the past and gain peace, you're likely to angrily reply, "It wasn't my fault. Why do I have to be the one to forgive?"

Within that reaction is the thought that forgiveness is about saying that the person who did the hurting has no responsibility for their actions and the consequences of their actions.

CONSIDER THESE IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES RELATING TO FORGIVENESS:

1. **Forgiveness is not about the other person.** When you forgive someone, including yourself, you're not saying that person has no responsibility for what happened. Their actions caused pain and, yes, they are responsible for that pain.
 - Even if they completely accept the responsibility for their actions, that doesn't take away your pain. Even if they tell you how sorry they are 100 times, that won't take away your pain.

- **You are the one who holds that pain and you are the one who will need to let it go.** No, it's not fair, but it is true.
- Forgiveness is completely about you. It's about your freedom, your peace, and your future.

2. **Forgiveness is not about staying with someone who is toxic.** A major misconception about forgiveness is that you then must be with the person who harmed you, even if that person is toxic.

- You don't need to be with someone who emotionally, physically, or sexually abuses you, lies continually, is drunk or high much of the time, or steals from you, whether they steal things, your self-respect, or your dignity.
- **You don't have to be friends with or spend time with people who cause you to feel terrible about yourself.** Forgiveness doesn't require this.
- Your job is to care for yourself and those you're responsible for. You can forgive

the person, release the anger and emotional pain, and never see them again.

3. Forgiveness does not mean you have to trust someone who has betrayed you again... and again... and again.

- Recognize that many people have an addiction. This addiction could be to substances, shopping, sex, gambling, even lying. An active addict has characteristics which are part of the disease and you only see those characteristics when they're using.
- They lie even when the truth would do better. They're irresponsible. They'll take care of their addiction first and not pay attention to you. They steal. And they won't even notice when they've hurt you.
- There are also those who have personality disorders. They can ruin your self-esteem, cause you to doubt yourself, and convince you that what you know you saw or heard is not true.

- You may release your pain by forgiving them but remember who they are. They can't help themselves. Accept that and stay away from them if possible.
4. **Forgiveness isn't giving away your power or making you weak.** Making the choice to forgive someone is one of the most powerful things you can do for yourself.

Anyone can hold onto anger. Comparatively few can truly forgive. That is the topic of the next lesson.

SUMMARY

In this lesson, you've learned the basics of what forgiveness is not. **It's the misunderstanding of what forgiveness is that blocks most people from attaining freedom from the deep hurts they've suffered in life.**

Before moving to the next lesson and learning what forgiveness is, take a few moments to anchor in what you've learned.

REFLECTION

PLEASE ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS AS FULLY AS YOU CAN:

1. What is your biggest concern about forgiving the person who hurt you the most?
2. Everyone has done something they are ashamed of. What is your biggest fear if you forgive yourself?
3. List all the reasons you have for not forgiving that one person who has hurt you so badly.