

"Forgiveness does not  
change the past, but it does  
enlarge the future"  
- *Paul Boose*



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# LEARNING TO FORGIVE

 Varies

 Varies

 Varies

Fold me

Fold me

## Learning to Forgive

Forgiveness involves suppressing or mitigating one's motivation for avoidance and revenge and ideally, replacing them with more positive or benevolent attitudes, feelings and behaviors.

How do you know if you've forgiven someone?

- You experience a shift in thinking
- Decreased desire to harm that person
- Increased desire to do him/her good

### Why Forgive?

Forgiving people are less likely to be hateful, depressed, hostile, anxious, angry and neurotic. Forgiving allows a person to move on. They are likely to be happier, healthier, more agreeable and more serene. In a scientific study of two groups, the forgiving group had lower anxiety and higher self-esteem. Forgiveness can deepen our sense of shared humanity (we are not alone in our hurts) and strengthen our personal relationships and our wider connections with others.

### Example from history

Bill Clinton asked Nelson Mandela how he could forgive his jailers. "When I walked out of the gate I knew that if I continued to hate these people, I was still in prison."

## How to Forgive

1. Appreciate being forgiven – recall a time when you did harm. How did it feel to be forgiven? Seek forgiveness of a past wrong. Write a letter of apology or say, "I'm sorry".
2. Imagine Forgiveness – try to imagine empathizing with the offender and granting him/her forgiveness. Practice empathetic and forgiving thoughts. People who were able to do this experienced lower heart rates, lower blood pressure and less furrowed brows (nobody want wrinkles!).
3. Write a letter of forgiveness – let go of your anger, bitterness and blame by writing – but not sending – a letter of forgiveness. "I forgive my father for his alcoholism", "I realize now that what you did was the best you could do at the time" etc. Don't dwell on it, Let it go and be free.
4. Consider Charitable Attributes – Write the letter you'd like to receive from your transgressor – do you buy it? Would you believe it? You may sense your perception shifting when you think about it from the other perspective.
5. Practice Empathy – develop a vicarious understanding of another's emotions and thoughts. Put yourself in their shoes. Can you learn something?
6. Ruminate Less – Those who brood and ruminate over a transgression are more likely to hold on to their hurt and anger. Just say to yourself, "Stop it"!