

What Forgiveness is Not

1. Denying that we are in pain.
2. Saying forget it. Saying “I am over it. It doesn’t matter ” is not forgiveness.
3. Conditional i.e. “ I will forgive you if...”
4. Forcing children to forgive and make up, may lead to more unforgiveness, not less.
5. Quick or easy.
6. Displacement of a hurt on to someone else or something else. I’m mad at the dog, not a person.
7. To help the other person. It really only helps us and may not affect another at all.

Forgiveness is

1. Specific- I forgive this person for this act, deed or words, etc.
2. Rooted in some feeling or emotion or memory. Eventually we need to get to that root and uproot it.
3. God given. God alone can get to the root or end of unforgiveness. To forgive really is divine! We need God’s help.
4. Generalized- when I forgive one person for one thing, God can graciously extend that healing to many more people or hurts in me.
5. A decision made with your intellect and will. God will give you the grace to forgive a person, place or thing.
6. Our willingness to pray for the offender, to come to that person’s spiritual aid, to treat them with respect.

The Process of Forgiveness

A process that takes time, because unforgiveness has grown over time.

This process has many steps:

Someone hurts us by word, look or action. This can be physical, emotional, spiritual or verbal.

1. We are confused or bewildered by the hurt. There is shock or a physical reaction e.g. angers, getting red, stammering, etc. This is of short duration.
2. We bury the hurt deep (and deeper) as time goes on.
3. We use substitutes to forget and ignore the hurt, e.g. drugs, alcohol, avoiding certain subjects, people, and places.
4. We deny we are hurting. This could go on for days, or even years.
5. We become discouraged because our denial does not work.

6. **We discover the truth through prayer, therapy, a friend, etc.**
7. **We take responsibility for our part of unforgiveness.**
8. **We pray for the root, the effects, and the results of the unforgiveness to be healed.**
9. **We are restored to spiritual health and healing by acknowledging the hurt and dealing with it.**

Results of unforgiveness

1. **Bodily hurts and symptoms- everything from a head cold to cancer, headache to back ache.**
2. **Stressed or broken relationships.**
3. **Emotional blocks or deficits.**
4. **Verbal anger or repression (tight lips, displaced anger) etc.**
5. **Spiritual anger at God, self and others.**

Healthy Ways to Come to Forgiveness Never hurt yourself or another

1. **Art - draw anger- words or picture express anger in a healthy way. Then rip it up.**
2. **Hate Letters - write anger in a letter - be very specific and direct - Never send! Instead, rip them up.**
3. **Play dough or clay - sculpt your anger and beat it to a pulp!**
4. **Write name of people on your shoe soles and walk on them until name disappears.**
5. **Hit pillows on couch or sofa.**
6. **Scream or yell in the car, or yell while you are at home alone.**
7. **Rip up old phone books.**
8. **Nerf balls and plastic bats or golf club- use them to hit something soft.**
9. **Clench and unclench fists- until your arm gets tired.**
10. **Exercise- walking, running, swimming etc.**
11. **Gardening with vigor.**