

Steps to Forgiveness

1. Write it down: Make a list of people you need to forgive and what you want to forgive them for. Include what you need to forgive *yourself* for. (See the other forgiveness worksheet for a complete activity for this step.)

2. Reflect: Acknowledge the pain that the lack of forgiveness (on your part) has caused you and how it currently impacts your life. Is it more painful than the actual experience?

3. Apologize: Express your apology through a letter, email, phone call, or in person. (Remember not to be attached to the results since this is about you, not them. Do not expect to be forgiven.) What will you say?

4. Express grievances: If there are items on your forgiveness list that you have never addressed with the person, approach them about it. There may be a misunderstanding behind the situation, or you may receive an apology. (Do not be attached to the outcome. Express yourself for its own sake.)

5. Learn the lessons: What are some things that you can learn from the situations? Are there any positives that have or can come out of the experiences? What lessons could the other person(s) have learned?

6. Let go: Release any expectations from anyone else. This includes expectations of forgiveness or apologies from others or changes in others' behaviors. Forgiving doesn't mean accepting unacceptable behavior, but if the person does not change it is your responsibility to do what's right for you, even if it means cutting ties with the person. What expectations do you release?

7. Reprogram your mind: Create an action plan on how to shift your resentful thoughts when negative feelings come up. Even once you forgive old mental patterns may be retriggered. Write down what you will tell yourself to remind yourself of your forgiveness and refocus back to your true desires.

8. Live and be free! Forgiveness is about personal power. A life well lived is your best revenge; therefore take your power back and focus on your desires. Don't do it because, "You'll show them," do it because you want to live your life with freedom and passion. Forgiveness is often an opportunity to learn, grow, and heal. We may even find that the negative experiences were blessings in disguise if we can create a place for forgiveness and acceptance in our hearts. Remember forgiveness is 100 percent your responsibility. Only you can unlock the door to your prison and shift your life from limitation to freedom.