

October 2020



Forgiveness is Restorative

Forgiveness can be defined as untangling ourselves emotionally from transgressions and transgressors so we are free to experience joy in our future relationships. Forgiveness challenges us to surrender our need to seek revenge and give up grudges against others. It is not a "one and done" experience, so we don't simply "forgive and forget." Some days we have to remind ourselves over and over again, because forgiveness is ongoing. Just when we settle ourselves, memories stir us up again, or the person we have forgiven shows up and re-offends. We must find ways to rebuild trust, protect our sense of safety in relationships, and determine ways to prevent the experience of pain and betrayal.

Whatever road you choose to travel, forgiveness is possible for anyone. Find a roadmap that fits you and begin. It may be one of the greatest gifts you give yourself. The results of your efforts may surprise you. "The giant pine tree grows from a tiny sprout. The journey of a thousand miles starts from beneath your feet." (Lao Tzu, in the *Tao Te Ching*)

Everett Worthington, Ph.D., and Robert Enright, Ph.D., have researched this topic and determined there are many health benefits forgiveness can bring. Here are some concrete ways in which you can make forgiveness a way of life. Links to more information about the work of these two authors are included in their material below.

R.E.A.C.H. Forgiveness of Others

Everett Worthington, Ph.D., Virginia Commonwealth University

R = Recall the hurt.

To heal, you have to face the fact that you've been hurt. Make up your mind not to be snarky (i.e., nasty and hurtful), not to treat yourself like a victim, and not to treat the other person as a jerk. Make a decision to forgive. Decide that you are not going to pursue payback but you will treat the person as a valuable person.

E = Empathize with your partner.

Empathy is putting yourself in the other person's chair. Pretend that the other person is in an empty chair across from you. Talk to him. Pour your heart out. Then, when you've had your say, sit in his chair. Talk back to the imaginary you in a way that helps you see why the other person might have wronged you. This builds empathy, and even if you can't empathize, you might feel more sympathy, compassion, or love, which helps you heal from hurt. This allows you to give

A = Altruistic gift.

Give forgiveness as an unselfish, altruistic gift. We all can remember when we wronged someone—maybe a parent, teacher, or friend—and the person forgave us. We felt light and free. And we didn't want to disappoint that person by doing wrong again. By forgiving unselfishly, you can give that same gift to someone who hurt you.

C = Commit.

Once you've forgiven, write a note to yourself—something as simple as, "Today, I forgave [person's name] for hurting me." This helps your forgiveness last.

H = Hold onto forgiveness.

We write notes of commitment because we will almost surely be tempted to doubt that we really forgave. We can re-read our notes. We did forgive.

FROM: <http://www.evworthington-forgiveness.com/reach-forgiveness-of-others>



Restoration
Matters



Restoration Matters News Updates

We welcome new subscribers – inquire
at info@restorationmatters.org

Our Restoration Matters trainer, **Mary Trentman**, middle school teacher at St. Mary's School, Mt. Vernon, IL, will be featured on a national panel this month at the Harm, Healing, and Human Dignity: An All-Virtual Catholic Conference on Restorative Justice, scheduled for October 27, 29, and 31. We will have a resource booth at the event.

New training available in *Listening Circle Facilitation* for dealing with difficult topics. Your organization can prepare leaders for handling difficult situations using restorative practices. Topics such as racism, the upcoming elections, and Covid are a few suggestions to explore by preparing people to listen without judgment or advice-giving. Call us to learn more about this valuable training.

Copyright © 2020. Restoration Matters, All rights reserved

Guideposts for Forgiving

(From Robert Enright's *Forgiveness is a Choice: A Step-by-Step Process for Resolving anger and Restoring Hope*, p. 78, 79.)

Phase 1: Uncovering your anger. To forgive, you must be willing to examine how much anger you have as a result of someone else's unfairness toward you/

Phase 2: Deciding to forgive. Forgiveness requires a decision and a commitment.

Phase 3: Working on forgiveness. Simply making a decision to forgive isn't enough. People need to take concrete actions to make their forgiveness real. This phase culminates with the giving of a moral gift to the one who hurt you.

Phase 4: Discovery and release from emotional prison. Unforgiveness, bitterness, resentment, and anger are like the four walls of a prison cell. Forgiveness is the key that opens the door and lets you out of that cell.