

Forgiveness Exercise

· Our Daily Bread Newsletter March 2002 “We don’t forgive to let those who have harmed us off the hook. We forgive to turn the offenders over to God and to get the bitterness and anger out of our stomachs. If we don’t forgive our own anger will consume us.”
· TIC Lent 2002 “Many of us still regard forgiveness as a human act instead of a divine act. We all tend to want revenge. We like to remind people how much they have hurt us. We often have the misconception that if we forgive someone, we’re condoning their actions... To the degree that we refuse to forgive, we drag resentment around with us. If we’re not willing to forgive and move beyond our anger, then we’re stuck. Forgiveness is not a gift we give someone else; it is a gift we give to ourselves. It is not something we do because the other person deserves it. In fact, the other person may not even know that we harbor anger and resentment against him – and may not even care – but we are the ones paying the price for carrying around the burden. Say to yourself: “My not forgiving costs me too much, and I refuse remain stuck at this point in my life.” When we ask Him, God gives us the Grace to freely forgive even those who have wounded us deeply.”

To deal with Forgiveness, we will follow the plan Bill W. laid out in the 12 & 12 and the Big Book. Bill wrote...

· [12&12 (78:1)] “The moment we ponder a twisted or broken relationship with another person, our emotions go on the defensive... Let’s remember that alcoholics are not the only ones bedeviled by sick emotions. Moreover, it is usually a fact that our behavior when drinking has aggravated the defects of others... In many instances we are really dealing with fellow sufferers, people whose woes we have increased. If now we are about to ask forgiveness for ourselves, why shouldn’t we start out by forgiving them, one and all?”

· [12&12 (77:1)] “Steps Eight and Nine are concerned with personal relations. First, we take a look backward and try to discover where we have been at fault (4th step), next we make a vigorous attempt to repair the damage we have done (steps 8 & 9); and third, having thus cleaned away the debris of the past, we consider how, with our newfound knowledge of ourselves, we may develop the best possible relations with every human being we know.” (Including those we won’t forgive)

Is there anyone that you refuse to forgive?

· List the people here and number them.

· [12&12 (94:2)] “There are cases where our ancient enemy, rationalization, has stepped in and has justified conduct which was really wrong. The temptation here is to imagine that we had good motives and reasons when we really didn’t” (we focus on what they did to us, not what we did) Keeping this quote in mind...

· Did you harm this person in ANY WAY? If so, Write out the harms you did.

· [12&12 (95:0)] “Learning daily to spot, admit, and correct these flaws is the essence of character-building and good living. An honest regret for harms done, a genuine gratitude for blessings received, and a willingness to try for better things tomorrow will be the permanent assets we shall seek.”

Keeping this quote in mind....

· Have you made amends for the harms you did? If not, with your sponsor's & God's help, please set right the wrong... (66:4) “This was our course. We realized that the people who wronged us were perhaps spiritually sick. Though we did not like their symptoms (column 2) and the way these disturbed us (column 3), they, like ourselves, were sick too. We asked God to help us show them the same tolerance, pity, and patience that we would cheerfully grant a sick friend.”

· [12&12 (93:3)] “When prideful, angry, jealous, anxious, or fearful, we acted accordingly, and that was that. Here we need only recognize that we did act or think badly, try to visualize how we might have done better, And resolve with God’s help to carry these lessons over into tomorrow, making, of course, any amends still neglected.

· Write out - how can you be helpful to the person you refuse to forgive?

· Write out what it looks like to be kindly toward this person.

· Write out what it looks like to be tolerant toward this person.

Every Day, for each person you can’t forgive, place their name in the blanks and pray these prayers until your heart softens...

1. “God, please help me to forgive _____. Father, please save me from being angry. Help me to put out of my mind the harm they did and help me not to argue or retaliate against this person. God please show me how to take a kindly and tolerant view of each and every one. Thy will be done.”

2. “May _____ be well and happy.”

“May _____ be free from anger.”

“May _____ be free from suffering.”

3. “God, please bless _____ with the same Love and Kindness that You bless me. Soften my heart toward _____ and help me to realize that whatever I feel _____ may have done to me, it has not actually changed the true essence of who and what I am inside. Lord, please keep me mindful of the fact that I am still your Loving child and that Your Love is still intact within me. Please heal me and help me radiate Your Love and Compassion to everyone, especially to _____. Father, please Grace me with Forgiveness toward _____ that by Your example, I may learn to Love them with Unconditional Love, the same way You Love me.”

Dave F.