

The Freedom of Forgiveness



Are you ready to release resentment and free yourself to move beyond a painful past?

Carrying a grudge is a heavy weight to bear. At some point in our lives, we have been hurt or wounded by the actions or words of another, and these disappointments often lead to feelings of resentment, bitterness, grief and anger. These emotions can be paralyzing and leave us locked in emotional bondage to make our lives miserable.

The people most likely to hurt us are those closest to us – our partners, friends, siblings and parents. When we're hurt by someone we love and trust – whether it's a lie, rejection, betrayal, insult or abuse – it can be extremely difficult to overcome.

The choice to forgive is often misunderstood to mean forgetting or accepting the unfair actions of another; but, in fact, it is the key to moving past your pain and moving on with life. If you are ready to let go of grudges and no longer be defined by how others have acted, then it's time to embrace the healing possibilities and benefits of forgiveness. Consider the following six facts:

6 Facts of Forgiveness

Forgiveness does not mean agreement

Forgiveness does not mean you accept the unfair or destructive behavior. It is not finally saying "OK" to something that is not, nor was not, OK. A common misconception is that forgiving someone is the same as condoning their actions. You do not have to agree with the other person to begin working on how to forgive them.

Forgiveness does not depend on the other person

The good news is you don't have to wait on another person to change before you can make your own change for the better. You don't have to wait for an apology that may never come. Forgiveness means acknowledging a wrong and choosing to look past it – whether the other person admits fault or not. Forgiveness is a choice only you can make. It means facing your feelings directly and honestly. And it is done on your time and on your terms.

Forgiveness does not erase the past

Forgiveness does not undo the damage or eliminate the pain from the past, but it does lessen its grip on you and help you focus on other positive parts of your life. It doesn't mean you forget what happened or pretend it didn't happen. Forgiveness involves coming to terms with what cannot be undone and doing something about it – for yourself, for today and for your future.

More at Midday March 5, 2008

Forgiveness is often difficult

If you have been hurt by harsh words or betrayed by unjust acts, it can be very difficult to pick yourself up and move forward and trust again. When we feel the other person has not fully grasped the pain and anguish they have caused, it can be especially hard to let it go. Forgiveness is a journey that begins only when you are totally ready to release all the feelings associated with being a victim.

Forgiveness can improve your health

Negativity is depressing – physically, mentally, spiritually and emotionally. Forgiveness is a huge stress reliever and can also strengthen your immune system. It is good for your body, your mind and your relationships! Refusing to forgive can bring into your life problems like anxiety, grief, depression, sleepless nights, anger and vengefulness. By forgiving, you can reduce not only the hostility and stress, but also your risk of heart problems, cancer and other diseases.

Forgiveness is a gift to yourself

Regain your power for yourself! Forgiveness is a gift you give to yourself. It is not something you do for someone else. When you don't practice forgiveness, you may be the one who pays most dearly. Through forgiveness, you will find peace of mind and freedom from the pain of the past. Your family and friends will also benefit: you will have more satisfying relationships. Dedicate your energy to healing rather than hurting – the best gift you can give yourself.

If you've never forgiven someone who's hurt you or been unfair, you're caught in a vicious trap that can ultimately destroy you. A professional counselor can help you untie the binds that are keeping you from living a life of purpose and joy. Contact Centerstone for more information at **(615) 460-HELP (4357)** today!

About Centerstone

Centerstone (www.centerstone.org), a not-for-profit organization, is the largest behavioral healthcare provider in Tennessee and the ninth largest in the nation. Serving the community for more than fifty years, Centerstone provides a full range of behavioral health and related educational services to individuals of all ages and their families. Centerstone also conducts research that seeks to identify, treat and eliminate mental illness. Centerstone provides services to more than 50,000 individuals annually. Children, adolescents, adults, seniors, and families all receive help from a multitude of different programs in more than 75 facilities and 150 partnership locations throughout the region. Centerstone is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). For more information about Centerstone, please call toll free at (888) 291-4357.

About Susan Gillpatrick, MEd, LPC, CTS

Susan Gillpatrick, Centerstone Crisis Management Specialist, primarily works in the field with clients in critical incident response situations, and in Centerstone's wellness trainings and presentations. She is also responsible for planning and implementing marketing and growth strategies for Centerstone's Crisis Management Strategies.

In recent years, Ms. Gillpatrick worked for the Shelby County Government Victims Assistance Center in Memphis. There, she co-developed a model program for the state of Tennessee entitled, "Homicide Response." Her work in this area received the 2000 Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties.

Ms. Gillpatrick is a Licensed Professional Counselor, Certified Trauma Specialist, Certified Workplace Conflict Mediator, and Mental Health Service Provider in the state of Tennessee and a National Certified Counselor. She is also a member the American Counseling Association, the Association of Traumatic Stress Specialists, the Tennessee Mental Health Counseling Association, and the Middle Tennessee Employee Assistance Professionals Association. She is a frequent presenter at local and national conferences, and has had numerous articles published. She received her Master of Education degree in Human Development Counseling from Peabody College at Vanderbilt University.