



## **The Greatest Gift**

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Imagine a gift that can increase self esteem, reduce stress, and can be given to anybody. Imagine a gift that can lift spirits, enliven inspiration, and even ignite passions. This ideal gift is not found by shopping online, or at the mall, or within the catalogues mounting in your mailbox. It is not something that fits into a bag or in a box, and it provides a feeling of warmth more fitting than a personalized pair of sox.

What is this perfect gift? It is a gift you give yourself – the gift of Forgiveness. By being forgiving of yourself, you can then accept yourself and be more responsible for your life choices. Self-forgiveness is the willingness to believe that you are worthy of love, respect, and great successes. There are dangers when we fail to forgive – dangers that have the potential to limit our relationships with others and ourselves. A failure to forgive yourself has the same consequences as a failure to forgive others. It can result in emotional bondage, uneasiness in your spirit, and a cloud of uncertainty about all your relationships.

### **6 signs you are stuck in a rut of guilt and regret:**

- **Feeling unworthy**  
When you feel unworthy, it affects your self-esteem and self worth. You may find yourself lacking any self-love, instead becoming caught up in unresolved self-anger, self-hatred and self-blaming.
- **Being paralyzed by the past**  
When you cannot let go of your guilt and regrets, there might as well be a chain connecting you to them.
- **Having unresolved issues**  
Until you resolve the issues that are weighting you down, you will likely experience feelings of helplessness and even depression.
- **Being unable to forgive yourself**  
When you are unable to forgive yourself, you might become self-destructive, punishing yourself and showing indifference to your own needs.
- **Acting defensive and distant**  
Your guilt may create a barrier between you and others.
- **Feeling afraid of trying again**  
Your fear of failure, due to constantly reliving the past, may cripple any attempts to move on from the event and forgive yourself.

The act of self-forgiveness changes the energy and the physical structure of your cells, and of your DNA. Guilt is a very powerful and deadening emotion. Guilt can close down the energy systems of your body, and thereby lesson the flow of healing energy and love for our self and for others. The lack of forgiveness is emotionally and physically damaging.

Sometimes the most difficult person to forgive is the one you face in the mirror. Some common situations that challenge self-forgiveness include: overwhelming guilt from a failed marriage, parenting errors, family and relationship mistakes, and poor financial decisions.

## **7 Tips to forgive yourself of past failures, mistakes and disappointments**

### **Let go of self-anger**

The effort it takes to maintain total disdain for yourself drains your time and energy, and it limits how you receive care from others.

### **Accept yourself as human**

Acknowledge you are not an all knowing and all powerful super person. Everyone has slips in their reactions and actions.

### **View your mistake as a learning opportunity**

Own your mistake. Understand the lesson. Learn from it.

### **Let go of fear of the future**

Be willing to take risks. You now know differently, so you can choose differently.

### **Trust in yourself and your goodness**

You are not a bad person, but one that simply made a faulty or hasty decision. The good is still in you. You have value to contribute to others.

### **Admit that hiding doesn't heal the hurt**

Trying to block the burden of shame and guilt only keeps it just under the surface. Hiding the hurt placed of yourself and others keeps you chained to the past.

### **Imagine the gains of moving forward**

Picture yourself free from the guilt, regret and self- condemnation. Live in the moment. Be intentional in new and improved decisions that open up opportunities for freedom and success.

If you are tired of limits your self-condemnation places on you, you can do something about it. The past cannot be changed, and the future depends on the decisions you make today. Below are seven tips to replace those self-defeating thoughts.

If you are holding to a grudge toward yourself, I challenge and encourage you to let go. Contact Centerstone at (615) 460-4357 to schedule individual counseling services, which can assist in freeing you from the bondage of your protecting guilt - for any past regrets. Give yourself that gift today! Or to invite Susan Gillpatrick to speak with your group or organization, she can be reached at (615) 460-4445.

“By far the strongest poison to the human spirit is the inability to forgive oneself or another person.” -  
Caroline Myss

Centerstone ([www.centerstone.org](http://www.centerstone.org)), celebrating 50 years of service in 2006, is the largest behavioral healthcare provider in Tennessee and the ninth largest in the nation. A not-for-profit organization, Centerstone provides a full range of behavioral health and related educational services to individuals of all ages and their families. Centerstone is devoted to research that seeks to identify, treat and eliminate mental illness. Each year, the organization provides services to more than 50,000 individuals. Children, adolescents, adults, seniors, and families all receive help from a multitude of different programs at more than 65 facilities and 140 partnership locations throughout the region. For more information about Centerstone, please call (615) 460-4357 or 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.

To request Susan Gillpatrick to speak with your group or organization about complete wellness in living, contact her at (615) 460-4445 or [susan.gillpatrick@centerstone.org](mailto:susan.gillpatrick@centerstone.org).