

Myths of Forgiveness



Throughout our lives, parents, teachers and religious leaders have urged us to: "Forgive and forget", "Turn the other cheek", "Let bygones be bygones", "Kiss and makeup"

As a result we have all grown up with certain ideas about what forgiveness really *is*. If we are to forgive and let go, it is essential to dispel some of the common myths about forgiveness.

- Myth #1 TO FORGIVE MEANS TO FORGET ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED**
I may still remember the incident that lead to the emotional pain but the memory will no longer carry the *emotional charge* that it once had.
- Myth #2 FORGIVENESS CAN ONLY BE ACCOMPLISHED IF I AM A SPIRITUAL OR RELIGIOUS PERSON.**
Forgiveness can be accomplished by anyone who has willingness and can see the value in it for *themselves*.
- Myth #3 I MUST FEEL LIKE FORGIVING BEFORE I CAN FORGIVE.**
Forgiveness itself is a choice and is available at anytime. The choice to forgive does not deny our feelings. In actuality, the opposite is true. Forgiveness requires that I first acknowledge my feelings.
- Myth #4 I CAN ONLY FORGIVE IF THE OTHER ASKS FOR IT OR APOLOGIZES FIRST.**
If I am waiting for the other to take the first step, I will be waiting for the rest of my life. If I am to resolve the pain that I carry because of unforgiveness, I need to take the first step.
- Myth #5 FORGIVENESS MEANS PRETENDING THAT NOTHING HAS HAPPENED.**
The opposite is true. Forgiveness means facing the upsetting situation and acknowledging the fact of it. It means acknowledging the emotions that have arisen out of the upsetting situation.
- Myth #6 I MUST FORGIVE IMMEDIATELY.**
While forgiveness is available to me at any moment, I need to respect my *readiness* and *willingness*.
- Myth #7 I MUST HAVE A GUARANTEE THAT I WON'T BE HURT AGAIN**
There are no guarantees that I won't get hurt again. Forgiveness itself is unconditional and is an expression of letting go of the past. In contrast *holding on* to hurts does *not guarantee* that I will never be hurt again.
- Myth #8 I AM SUPPOSED TO FORGIVE BECAUSE MY RELIGION SAYS I SHOULD.**
Forgiveness itself is a *choice* that is motivated by the benefit and advantage to me and my life. If I *should* forgive, I probably won't. If I *could* forgive, I might. And if I *choose* to forgive, I will.
- Myth #9 FORGIVENESS IS FOR THE OTHER'S BENEFIT**
In actual fact, forgiveness is for *my* benefit. *I* am the one who is released to live my life again. The other may certainly gain out of my forgiveness, but forgiveness is primarily for *me*.
- Myth #10 TO FORGIVE MEANS THAT I AM APPROVING OF SOMEONE'S NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR**
Forgiveness does *not* say, "Sure go right ahead and hurt me again." In actual fact, forgiveness acknowledges the hurtful situation. In the context of a relationship, forgiveness *trusts* that you will take my hurt into account.