



# FORGIVENESS

an exploration of forgiveness by Tim Burnett

## TO FORGIVE:

- (1) to cease to feel resentment against (an offender)
  - (2) to give up any claim to requital (compensation or retaliation)
  - (3) to grant relief from debt.
- [Merriam-Webster]

***"To forgive is to abandon all hope of a better past."***

- author unknown, quoted by Jack Kornfield

## SOME POINTS ABOUT FORGIVENESS:

- We can't forgive others, or ourselves, without first opening to the hurt that we experienced or caused.
- To forgive others, we must first accept the fact that we were hurt. We cannot forgive when we are in a state of fear or denial.
- To forgive ourselves, we must open to the guilt or shame of hurting others.
- Forgiveness doesn't mean accepting bad behavior or resuming a harmful relationship. It's letting go of the suffering we are holding on to in response to what happened.
- In considering those who have harmed us, it's helpful to remember that their actions are influenced by many factors beyond their control (culture, history, stress, limitations and misunderstandings, etc.). They are responsible for their actions and...the reality of choice and action is complicated.

- In considering the harm we have caused, this expression can be helpful:  
“It’s not my fault, but it is my responsibility.”

### **FIVE STEPS TO FORGIVENESS:**

1. **Opening to the pain** – feeling the distress of what happened.
2. **Self-compassion** – which has three steps:
  - a. Mindfulness: Feeling what we’re feeling with acceptance.
  - b. Common Humanity: This is a normal part of human life, many people feel this way.
  - c. Self-Kindness: What do I need right now? May I be kind to myself.
3. **Wisdom** – understanding that the situation wasn’t entirely personal but was also influenced by many factors beyond immediate control of each person.
4. **Raising the Intention to Forgive** – “May I begin to forgive myself for what I did.” “May I begin to forgive the other for what they did.”
5. **Taking Responsibility** – we commit to do our best to learn from each painful situation and not to cause harm.

### **FORGIVENESS MEDITATION CUES:**

- **Forgiveness from others:** After settling into the practice, bring to mind a harm you have caused. Be with it, explore the memory and the feelings that are here now as you recall that this happened. Holding in mind those you harmed, repeat: “I harmed you. As much as you are willing to, I now ask for your forgiveness.”
- **Forgiveness for others:** Now bringing to mind a time another harmed you. Bringing that situation gently to mind, breathe with it and feel the feeling in

your body. Repeat to the image of that person: “You harmed me. As much as I can, I now offer my forgiveness.”

- **Forgiveness for yourself:** Bringing to mind a way that you tend to harm yourself or a particular incident in which you made harmful choices. Sensing the reality and feeling of this as you repeat to yourself, “I harmed myself. As much as I can, I now offer myself forgiveness.”

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