

HOW TO PRACTICE FORGIVENESS

*for your self ...
for the other person ...*

It's simple. You make the intention to do so; watch as you fall short of your goal time after time, day after day; and then you make the intention again. Be patient. Your willingness to forgive yourself and others is a monumental step. Renewed intention slowly and surely takes its effect. You may not feel any differently after forgiving yourself/someone. Don't worry. Forgiveness is primarily *a decision that allows you to grow*. After you move more fully toward forgiveness, forgiveness becomes *a feeling*.

Here are a few exercises which focus awareness about forgiveness.

1. The inability to forgive may be indicative of insufficient grieving of a loss. Ask yourself: What have I lost in this situation? Forget about trying to forgive, and concentrate on telling the story of your pain or problem to every willing ear. Find friends who are not afraid of strong emotion, and cry with them. Write letters to yourself, or to others, describing and lamenting your loss. Enlist the help of a support group, or seek professional counseling to work out your grief. And it is work, so don't give up too soon.
2. Review all the things for which you blame yourself. With each one repeat to yourself: "I forgive you for _____, _____. I release you from any guilt or blame, now and forever." This may seem foolish or magical, especially if you don't *feel* forgiving. Do it anyway. It's up to you to create its reality by directing your intention.
3. Repeat the name of the person you want to forgive (this may include yourself) as you picture him/her in your mind's eye. Begin to see/feel good things. Let your imagination have free reign and bless yourself or the other abundantly and outrageously.
4. Lack of forgiveness may be a failure to acknowledge the beauty and strength of who you really are. Focusing on appreciation of these qualities in yourself or others is helpful in practicing forgiveness. Make a list of all the things that are great about you (or the other). Include your talents, accomplishments, sensitivities, caring and generous activities, courage or other virtues—everything you can think of. Don't be satisfied until you have a good, long list. Now post this list where you will see it frequently, and READ IT!
5. Visualize the person you want to forgive surrounded in a warm, golden light. See this light melt them, layer by layer, revealing the fears and pain they are hiding within. It also reveals the fears and pain they are hiding within. It also reveals their loving center—the hunger they have for peace and love. Allow yourself to feel their pain, fears, and love. Keep this picture in your mind for a few minutes. Allow forgiveness to be there.