

*Forgiveness*  
is not an occasional act,  
it is a permanent  
*attitude*  
- Martin Luther King Jr. -

## **FORGIVENESS:** *Gateway to the Life You Love*

**From the book**  
***Never Too Late: A Guide to Living the Life You Love***  
**by Sophia Ellen Falke**  
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“When you forgive someone, you dismantle  
your structures of knowing about him or her.  
You lay down your weapons and armor  
and proceed onward. You lighten up.”  
– *Maria Nemeth, Ph.D.*

“Only the brave know how to forgive.”  
– *Laurence Sterne*

“It’s one of the greatest gifts you  
can give yourself, to forgive.  
Forgive every’dy.”  
~Maya Angelou

## **Why Forgiveness**

Have you ever heard the saying, “I’ll forgive, but I’ll never forget.”? That’s the same as saying, “I won’t forgive.” Or, “I’m not willing to forgive and let go.” It’s the holding onto that is the obstacle. When the disciples asked Jesus how many times they should forgive, Jesus responded, “Seventy times seven.” Did he mean that literally? No. What he meant was to do your forgiveness work and releasing of hurt, anger, or any other negative emotion tied to a person or incident for as long it takes. Only then will you free up the negative energy that is holding you back.

Forgiveness might be necessary for another individual, for an occurrence (for example, the economy, a hurricane, a traffic jam that makes you miss a job interview or a service call), or yourself. Yes, yourself.

There are many books on forgiveness and many processes taught. If you’ve never read any of these books, you either don’t see the need for forgiveness or you think you’ve done all the forgiveness necessary and there’s no need to revisit the question.

I remember a woman who was suffering from mercury poisoning. It was caused initially by dental work. It was worsened by her own attempts at self-healing. By the time she came to me, she didn’t see any hope. She was further despondent because she wanted to re-experience a blissful moment where she felt one with God. This reconnection alluded her, and she was frustrated and angry that she could not again have this feeling of bliss with God. She wanted answers.

After praying with her, I asked, “Can you forgive the dentist whose actions started the mercury poisoning in the first place?” “Of course I can’t!” she replied vehemently. “Could you consider the possibility that you could forgive him?” “NO.” I worked with her all the way down to “Could you consider the possibility that someday years in the future, you could consider that you might finally be able to forgive him?” “Absolutely not.” was her response.

What do you think the possibility of her healing from the mercury poisoning or finding her bliss with God was? Until she could forgive that dentist, she wouldn’t heal.

Do you have similar circumstances in your life? An area where you feel you can’t forgive? If yes, you’re blocking your good, whether in relationships, health, work, joy, love, prosperity.

How do you forgive? The first step is, decide to forgive. Even if you see no reason for you to be the one to do the forgiving, decide anyway. Simply making the decision will start opening up blocked energy that is keeping you from your good.

## **Forgive Yourself First**

Forgiveness. Why forgive yourself? One reason lies in the judgment you have made to even think you need to forgive a person or situation. What is coming up for you that you feel the need to forgive? Or not forgive? Usually the judgment is that someone has done something “wrong.” He or she might have stolen, cheated, lied, harmed, etc. What is the meaning you place on that

action (or lack of action)? What comes up is some basic need is not being met by the other person's actions or the outer circumstance.

Years ago there was a television police program called *Dragnet*. When the detective interviewed someone he would always stop them if they started giving their interpretation of the event. He would say, "The facts, ma'am, just the facts." When something happens that disturbs you, what are the facts? Single those out first. Take a look at the interpretation you've placed on the occurrence.

Then ask, what need of mine was unmet when Joe said "X" or when the power went out or when the recession hit? Was your need for safety not met? Was your need for understanding not met? Was your need for sustenance not met? What basic, universal human need was not met?

Once you get in touch with the need that wasn't met, look at the feelings or emotions that arose because that need went unmet. The feelings are about you. They reflect the filters and judgment you placed on the original incident. The judgment and emotions sap your energy and put you in a place of unforgiveness and blockage.

That blockage becomes a major obstacle in attracting good into your life and revealing your answer to the question, "What would you love?" That's what happened to the woman with mercury poisoning. By the time she visited me her vibration was so low and her energy so depleted, the only thing that would have lifted her up was being willing to forgive.

Any negative emotion will prevent you from shining your light brightly. Imagine a pipe flowing out of a pond. Its purpose is to keep the flow of water moving so the pond doesn't get stagnant. Now imagine twigs, dirt, and dead plant life start getting stuck in the pipe. What happens? The flow becomes a trickle until it finally stops. Now imagine that you are at the receiving end of that pipe, and the pond is the source of your good. You depend on that pipe remaining open and free of impediments for your abundance to flow to you.

Anger, resentment, fear, and unforgiveness are like the twigs, dirt, and dead plants in the pipe. There is an abundance waiting to rush to you, yet you block it because you don't want to or don't see the need to forgive.

It's not just others that need forgiveness. Sometimes you need to forgive yourself. There may be something you did or didn't do that had repercussions that hurt someone else or caused you to fail at something that is important to you. Remember in the chapter on Clarity when you identified your standards? When you're not aligned with those standards, you're no longer being coherent with who you truly are. Feelings of self-loathing or disappointment can build—only to hold you back.

## **That Person No Longer Exists**

Whether forgiving someone else or yourself, it's important to remember you're no longer the same people. The person who did (or didn't do) the thing you are still upset about is gone. We're always evolving. Yes, the woman with the mercury poisoning was stuck. However, something could have shifted for her after our last meeting. I know that was the prayer I held for her.

This same principle applies to conflicts between families, ethnic and religious groups and countries. The story of the Hatfields and the McCoys lives on. When I first heard about their feud, I remember thinking how silly it was to hold onto something that had happened generations ago. Yet that's part of the human consciousness. You and I might not be able to directly influence what happens between families, cultures, or countries. We can, however, do our own forgiveness work. In so doing, we shift the energy and vibration for ourselves and those in our immediate sphere of influence. That raises their vibration, which impacts those around them. It's the ripple effect. It begins with you and me.

## **Exercise Your Forgiveness Muscles**

Tense up every muscle of your body. Go ahead. Every muscle from your forehead down to your toes. Squint your eyes. Clench your jaw and neck. Contract your chest. Tense your arms and hands. Pull in your abdomen as far as it will go. Squeeze your glutes, your thigh muscles, your knees and calves, and finally, your feet and toes. Go ahead tense every muscle. Now hold it. Keep holding it. Hold it.

Now release. How does that feel? While you tensed your entire body, could you do anything else? No, of course not. All your attention was on keeping your body tense, wasn't it? That's what unforgiveness is like—only on an emotional, mental, and spiritual level. You have focused all your attention on something that will hold you back.

When you released all that body tension, what did that feel like? Release? Relief? Like you were opening up? When you released your body's tension, were you then free to move forward with another physical activity? Yes, of course.

That's what forgiveness is like for your emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being.

Can you see now how not forgiving is a major obstacle in achieving any goal? If your goal is a loving relationship, how can you be loving when you're holding onto anger and resentment? If your goal is financial prosperity, how can you be prosperous when so much energy (think tensed body) is focused away from your goal? If your desire is to retire and live peacefully, how is that possible when you have such disharmonious feelings within?

I've mentioned this before, when a negative feeling arises, go within and discover what need has not been met. Honor that need. Acknowledge that you are experiencing these feelings.

Often just getting in touch with your unmet needs will reveal issues in other areas of your life that may require addressing. Your disquiet with another individual's action might be part of a pattern in your life that you have not yet recognized—a pattern that has kept you from experiencing abundance in your life. Isn't it time to look within rather than trying to lay blame and responsibility on people or conditions?

Remember, when you're pointing a finger of blame, retribution, or anger at someone or something else, three fingers are pointing back at you. (Notice your thumb is keeping them in place so you have the opportunity to look at your own issues.)

Taking this internal look will help you make your decision to forgive. It will give you a new perspective for viewing the situation. It will give you some breathing room.

## **Do It Now**

### **Exercise 1**

After you decide to forgive and have looked in the mirror, write down the situation that requires your forgiveness. It might be something simple such as someone cut you off in traffic or stepped in front of you in the long line at the airport. It might be more complex, involving physical or verbal abuse. Perhaps it's a downturn in the economy, being deployed overseas, the weather, or your car having serious mechanical problems.

#### **Journal Time:**

Write it down. The writing gives it substance, rather than it being some ethereal fantasy memory floating around in your mind. It's wonderful how, when we let things jump around in our minds, they become more and more intense, aggravating, and bigger-than-life. Write it down.

Next, write down every conceivable bad thing about what the person did or the situation. Write down how it hurt you, how it inconvenienced you, how it was just plain wrong, immoral, or disgusting. Get creative. And throw it all up.

Throw up every minute aspect of what happened. Did the downturn in the economy put you out of a job? Did you lose a relationship? Did you lose a limb and experience great emotional trauma? Write it all down.

When you think you're finished writing, keep writing. Empty yourself. Take a break and come back to your list. Did you forget anything? Keep writing.

Now that you see all that you've been holding onto, take a few moments and ask yourself some questions.

Have I laid down everything I've been holding onto?

Am I willing to release all this energy that I held onto and that is holding me back?

Am I willing to forgive?

Am I willing to release this energy now and forever?

Your answer might be "no" to some of these questions, especially the last one. Be peaceful with your answers, whether they are "yes" or "no."

Perhaps there's more that you need to release. Be willing to return to what you wrote down and add to it later. Simply by going through this exercise initially you have already released a large amount of pent-up anger and resentment. You have already freed some of the energy trapped in the prison of unforgiveness.

## **Exercise 2:**

This exercise can be practiced anywhere at any time. If you were unable to release your feelings of anger and resentment in exercise 1, this would be a good complementary practice to release the last of the negative energy you may still be holding.

### **When It's People**

Visualize the individual against whom you feel anger, resentment, dislike or hatred. That person did something that hurt you or someone you care about. Notice how you feel and negative energy you're experiencing when you think of them.

Now visualize someone you love and care deeply for. It might be a child, your spouse or sweetheart, a best friend, teacher, or a beloved pet. Notice how you feel when you think of this beloved and how expansive and light your energy is.

**The Interrupt/Substitute Practice:** When you find yourself thinking about the person for whom you have negative energy, immediately bring to mind the image of who you love. If you are angry with Bill, as soon as you think of "Bill," substitute the image of "Mary," whom you love. Notice a shift in energy when you interrupt the negative energy that arises around the image of "Bill" and substitute the image and energy to feel toward "Mary." At first you might find yourself quickly slipping back into the negative feelings for "Bill." However, as you continue this practice of interrupt and substitution, you'll discover a shift in the energy you feel for "Bill." Eventually, you'll no longer experience a negative charge when you think of "Bill." As you continue the practice, you'll even begin to experience more positive, compassionate feelings toward the individual you were upset with.

### **When It's A Situation or Condition**

As with the forgiveness practice for individuals bring to mind the situation or condition that caused upset in your life or the life of someone you care about. It might be the economy, a blizzard, or a fire that has stressed you. Notice the negative feelings that arise.

Next, bring to mind a situation or condition that brings you joy. It might be watching a sunset, reading a good book, or listening to classical music. Notice the higher vibration feelings associated with this memory.

**The Interrupt/Substitute Practice:** Follow the same process described for under "When It's People." When you think of the stressful situation or condition, interrupt the thoughts and substitute the image and feelings of that which brings you joy. Through this practice, whether for individuals or situations and conditions, you'll notice a transformation.

### **Exercise 3:**

Bring to mind the person toward whom you're holding unforgiving, angry, resentful or hurtful feelings. Say aloud,

"I forgive you for everything and anything you have said and done past, present, and future. Please forgive me for everything and anything I have said or done to you past, present, and future."

"But I've done nothing that requires forgiveness." you might be thinking. You might not be aware of it, but there's probably something you have said or done, perhaps not directly to that individual or situation which has made you energetically part of the situation. We are all creators of our life experiences, so in essence, we are all responsible for what is happening in the world.

Simply holding onto the negative energy of unforgiveness invites the opportunity for forgiveness. Years ago I heard of a couple whose daughter was brutally raped and murdered. The man responsible was apprehended, convicted, and put in prison. The parents visited the man after his incarceration and asked for his forgiveness. Why would they ask for forgiveness? Weren't they the injured parties? Wasn't it their daughter who had been so brutally murdered? What could they have been thinking to visit their daughter's murderer and ask for forgiveness? The answer is simple. They realized the anger and resentment they'd been holding toward this man was would negatively impact their own lives and the lives of everyone around them. For this, they asked forgiveness.

### **"Special Friends"**

When asked how he could forgive the Chinese government for all the atrocities they had heaped upon the Tibetan people, the Dalai Lama responded that there were friends and there were "special friends." The Chinese government was his special friend.

Who's your special friend? What gifts has the person or condition you've forgiven contributed to enrich your life that you would not otherwise have received? How have you deepened your spiritual connection with your higher power? How have you been better equipped to serve others because of a stressful experience? What have you released because of your forgiveness process that opened your life to greater opportunities and good?

Congratulations for taking this powerful step toward releasing the blockages to reaching your dream. Remember,

*Forgiveness is Your Gateway to Living the Life You Love*

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