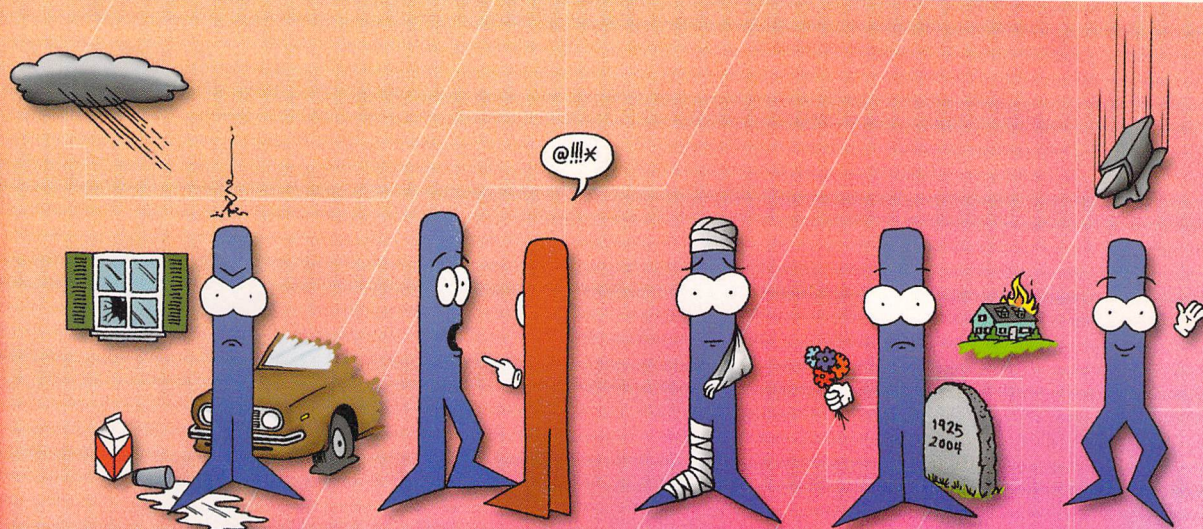


Burdens of Life Chart



Inconveniences

Insults

Injuries

Losses

Ill-Fated Circumstances

DESCRIPTION

Minor annoyances or difficulties, delays, unnecessary extra work, lack of easy access to something, confusions

Rude, insensitive, or offensive remarks, verbal attacks on one's identity, disregard or disrespect

Physical, emotional, and/or psychological wounds, including betrayals, rejection, and public humiliations

Death of a loved one, loss of ability or function, loss of property, reputation, or relationship

Natural catastrophe, accidents, famine, war, disease

ESSENTIAL EFFORTS BEHIND BLAME

They are stupid.

They are wrong, conceited bigots and jealous.

They are victimizers, bullies, cheaters, and deceivers.

They are murderers, criminals, and liars.

God has forsaken me.

EXPECTATION THAT IS DISAPPOINTED

I deserve not to be delayed.

I deserve to be respected.

I deserve not to be hurt.

I deserve to have.

I deserve not to suffer.

TRADITIONAL FOLK COMFORTS

Take a deep breath and count to ten.

Sticks and stones will break your bones, but words will never hurt you.

Some good will come of it.

It could be worse.

Everything happens for a purpose.



The Forgiveness Option



EXERCISE 1: The Burdens of Life Worksheet

Objective: To identify the events and people who have had a detrimental effect on your life.

Expected Results: Insights into cause and effect.

Instructions: You are looking for events, and the people who caused them, that still cause you an unpleasant emotional reaction or that stick your attention.

Fill in the following form with a brief description of what happened, who caused it, and your reaction.

Example →

1	2	3	4
What happened? / When?	Who caused it? / Who do you blame? / Why?	What was your reaction? / Resulting condition?	(Note: You will be instructed how to fill in column 4 in exercise 2.)
1. I was hit in the head with a baseball bat / when I was young	My brother / My mom and dad / for letting him hurt me whenever he wanted to	I went unconscious and woke up crying. / I still have a lump on my head and occasional headaches	
2.			
3.			



Why We Didn't Stay...

Begin Final Transmission...

Forgiveness is an offensive subject for you Earthlings. It is like a thief that threatens to rob you of your life savings of injustices, losses, unhealed wounds, grudges, old insults, and betrayals. Why do you save these things? Why does anybody save anything? It is because you find them useful, isn't it?

This savings account of all the bad things that have happened or been done to you is used to justify

your blame and anger. It also justifies your species' favorite mottos: "It wasn't my fault," "I was wronged," and, "You owe me."

Your victim-misfortune accounts finance all sorts of petty vengeance and pay interest in bouts of self-pity. Any time one of you turns into a criminal, or a terrorist, or some sorrowful psychiatric candidate, it's fairly certain that your victim-misfortune account is overflowing.



• continues

The Technology of Forgiveness

Beyond telling you that you should forgive, did anyone ever teach you **how** to forgive?

Recovering the technology of forgiveness begins with the realization that forgiveness is a series of steps that you take to restore your own peace of mind. It is self-healing. Whether or not it affects the other guy is up to him. Announcing to someone that you forgive him or her is a choreographed display of righteousness, and is not what forgiveness technology is about.

Not forgiving has consequences; it leads to victim consciousness and prolonged

suffering; it is the root of future wrongdoing. If you were to sit abusers down and explore what is generating their motivation to do harm to others, you would find many grudges, old insults, betrayals, and injustices—all unforgiven—that they feel have given them the right to harm anyone they choose.

Forgiveness breaks the abused-right-to-abuse chain. Breaking this chain is not only a kindness you do for yourself; it is a favor you do for generations to come.

Some Benefits of Forgiveness

- Accelerated healing, both emotionally and physically
- Relief from stiffness and chronic pains
- Increase in physical strength
- Stress reduction
- Immune system booster
- Better digestion and bowel function
- More restful sleep
- Relief from depression and resentment
- Relief from self-sabotage
- More energy, more control (both physically and mentally)
- Longer life
- More positive outlook
- Increased happiness
- Faster reaction time
- Friendlier, more tolerant
- More successful
- Increased awareness and intelligence
- Ability to establish new relationships
- Peace of mind
- A NEW LIFE!

If your practice of forgiveness (or pretense of forgiveness) has not produced the above results, then it is time you learned to do it properly.

The Four-Step Forgiveness Process

Forgiveness is a process, which means that it can be divided into a series of choices, experiences, and realizations. Obviously, since people have recommended it for several thousand years—even built entire religions around it—it works. If it doesn't work for you, or if you are having difficulty with it, chances are you are doing something wrong.

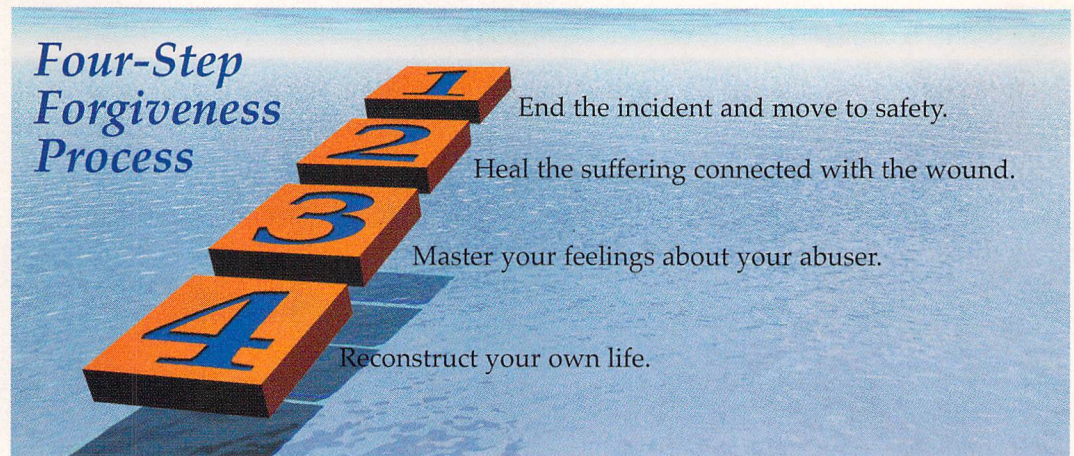
Many people are emotionally trapped, struggling their lives away, in the middle of a win-lose, right vs. wrong, victim vs.

victimizer game. How do they get above this game?

With the exception of trivial stuff like insults and inconveniences, it takes more than deciding to forgive to release the suffering of having been victimized. You must take four steps: 1) end the incident and move to safety, 2) heal the suffering connected with the wound, 3) master your feelings about your abuser, and 4) reconstruct your own life.

The Forgiveness Option

Four-Step Forgiveness Process



1. End the Incident and Move to Safety

If you are going to survive in today's society, it is wise to get trained, or train yourself, in effective defensive tactics. The primary purpose of a defensive tactic is to prevent or reduce exposure. That's it! Keep your head down. Take cover. Reduce the opportunities that a real or potential victimizer has to hurt you. Hang up the phone. Lock the door. Get out of the environment. Don't make yourself vulnerable to people you don't trust. Don't leave your possessions where they are likely to be stolen. Don't take short cuts through unfamiliar terrain. Take responsibility for your

effect of someone's carelessness or bad intentions; you are subject to an event that leaves you emotionally and/or physically wounded. It happens.

Being wounded releases adrenaline and other regulating chemicals into the bloodstream that trigger survival responses. The heart speeds up, external capillaries in the skin swell, and breathing speeds up. Stomach and bowel functions are interrupted. Perceptions and mental impressions intensify. For some, the experience can become an addiction.

The memories that you record during these crisis moments are emotionally charged with fear and pain.

Your first rational consideration (and this may or may not be your instinctive response) is how to escape the danger and get to safety. Don't stick around if you are able, and legally justified, to leave. Escape and evade. Put as much distance and as many barriers between you and the danger as possible. This applies to abusive spouses and double-crossing friends as well as to armed assailants—get out of there. Evacuate the crisis area.

If you have an opportunity to make an effective escape and you don't take it, you are responsible, at least partially, for the ensuing consequences.

security and the security of those in your charge. Reduce your risks. Make yourself inaccessible to known threats. This is not paranoia; it is rational risk management.

Even with precautions, you will occasionally find yourself at the unwilling

If someone intentionally or carelessly inflicts an emotional or physical wound on you, get away from him or her as a first action. The reason you break contact as a first step is to give yourself time to calm down and recover from shock. You have to catch your breath, stop any bleeding, and lower your emotional voltage in order to think and act deliberately. This step requires self-discipline and should not be confused with a lack of courage. (If the situation calls for it, this is the time you notify the authorities.)

If you have an opportunity to make an effective escape and you don't take it, you

are responsible, at least partially, for the ensuing consequences. In any future forgiveness processing you will also need to forgive yourself for bad judgment. Should you ignore this step and decide to stand your ground and go toe to toe in some righteous bravado, victim and abuser no longer apply. The winner will be determined by the rules governing competitive endeavors, or a court of law, or effective firepower. If you voluntarily engage a perpetrator, the responsibility for consequence is your own.

*I do my thing, and you do
your thing.
I am not in this world to live
up to your expectations,
and you are not in this
world to live up to mine.
You are you and I am I,
and if by chance we find
each other, it's beautiful.
If not, it can't be helped.*

—Fritz Perls, Founder of
Gestalt Therapy

EXERCISE 2: Burdens of Life Worksheet (Column 4)

Objective: To identify the events and people who have had a detrimental effect on your life, *and what you might have done to prevent the situation.*

Instructions: Fill in column 4 with what you might have done to prevent the situation described in column 1.

Expected Results: Insights into rational risk management.

1	2	3	4
What happened? /When?	Who caused it? / Who do you blame? / Why?	What was your reac- tion? / Resulting consequences?	What I might have done to prevent the situation.
1. I was hit in the head with a baseball bat /When I was young	My brother / My mom and dad / for letting him hurt me whenever he wanted to	I went unconscious and woke up crying. / I still have a lump on my head and occasional headaches	I could have been more alert to the danger of antagonizing my brother.
2.			
3.			

Example
←



2. Heal the Suffering Connected with the Wound

If a wound has **not** affected you deeply, time will quickly and mercifully heal it. However, if you have been traumatically wounded, the emotional pain may stay with you even after the physical wound has healed. Life continues around you, but part of your attention is stuck, via these high-voltage emotional memories, to a past event and the perpetrator that you

Paradoxically, to suffer (*verb*) is the cure for suffering (*noun*). To suffer means to willingly feel the discomfort of an injury, a loss, or the emotions of a betrayal. It means to accept, to own, and endure all facets of the experience including resistances, emotions, and pains.

In the case of insults, rejections, and attacks on your reputation, you experience the result the abuser was intending to produce. The attitude is a courageous, "I accept!"

Suffering does not mean that you are going to forget an event; it just means that you will reduce the emotional voltage by massaging the memory of the event until it is equal to any other memory.

As long as you resist suffering an event, its memory can push your life around. When you accept and revisit the event, and own the suffering in all its detail, you recover source. The re-experience can be frightening, painful, and overwhelming with grief. This is OK. Quake in fear, let out a wail, or cry your eyes out. Roll on the floor, curl up under a blanket; it will pass. You are becoming real with your feelings of shame and helplessness. This is heroic stuff. Yes, it hurts, but be courageous. How long and how intensely you want to suffer is largely up to you. You can do it in a marathon session or shorter sessions stretching over several weeks. Somewhere in the depth of your misery, the dark clouds will suddenly clear, and you will recover source over your life. The only thing you can change about the past is how much you let it affect you. (*If you do this in a ReSurfacing or Avatar Course context, as a future preventative, address any transparent beliefs that might cause the crisis or injury to repeat, e.g., "I deserve to suffer."*)

In this step of the forgiveness process, you ignore the injurer and concentrate on the memory of the injury. You accept and fully re-experience the resisted feelings connected with it. You come to grips with *how it was* rather than focusing on *who did it* or *how it should have been*.

(Recommended: This and That exercise from *ReSurfacing*, p. 96)

The only thing you can change about the past is how much you let it affect you.

consider caused you to suffer. You assume the identity of victim. The hate and bitterness you feel generate fantasies of revenge that rob you of peace of mind and self-respect. These fantasies create obsessive (and energy draining) beliefs that lead to self-sabotage. You may even, as some have done, ruin the rest of your life in a delusional attempt to punish your abuser.

The belief that the emotional pain is undeserved or unfair causes you to resist experiencing it. The computation amounts to, "I shouldn't have to experience **that**." So instead of accepting (*i.e.*, turning a "that" into a "this") and healing, the emotional pain is projected outward in resentment, blame, and anger. This blame and avoidance only delays the forgiveness process and produces further suffering.

You may even generalize the perpetrator of your injury into a class, *e.g.*, men, women, soldiers, authority figures, cult members, etc. This generalizing, caused by an unresolved emotional wounding, is the root of bigotry and, in extreme cases, mental illness.

Trust in the wisdom of the ages—it is better to accept and forgive. Experience your suffering willingly until you move beyond it. What you may find is that the lessons you learn from suffering become an enriching life experience.

The stages of healing are: a) accept and own the suffering, b) experience it willingly, and c) put it behind you.

I imagine one of the reasons people cling to their hates so stubbornly is because they sense once hate is gone, they will be forced to deal with the pain.
—James Baldwin