

8 Steps to Forgiving

- 1. Acknowledge the pain.** Sometimes it's hard to admit you've been hurt because doing so intensifies the feelings. But you won't be able to work through the pain until you admit you're hurting. Tears are a pretty good indicator that something's wrong. So are feelings of resentment.
- 2. Think through the pain.** Be honest about how you feel, even if you think you shouldn't feel that way. Admit that you don't like what happened or how you were treated and that it makes you sad or angry. Try writing these feelings in a journal or sharing them with a trusted Christian friend.
- 3. Put yourself in the shoes of your offender.** Think about a time when you have wronged another person, maybe your parents, a sibling or a friend. You needed their forgiveness. Did that person extend forgiveness to you, or withhold it? How did it make you feel? When it comes to forgiving others, remember these words from Jesus: "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you ..." (Matthew 7:12).
- 4. Remember that God forgave you.** If you're a Christian, you've admitted your need for *God's* forgiveness. Remembering how he forgave you, when you didn't deserve it, can help you forgive others. You may not be ready at this point to voice your forgiveness to your offender. In fact, communication with that person may be impossible if, for example, the person is no longer living. That's OK. You can forgive someone without having your offender accept your forgiveness.
- 5. Remember that God commands us to forgive.** When Jesus taught about prayer, he stressed the importance of forgiving others (Luke 11:14). And in Mark 11:25, he says, "If you hold anything against anyone, forgive him ..."
- 6. Let go of the pain.** Once you've gone through the stages above, refuse to hold onto your hurt. Don't replay the offense over and over. Allowing yourself to get sad or angry again and again will only cause you more pain. Determine that you are going to choose to forgive your offender. Your emotions might not agree with this decision. This is where prayer comes in. Tell God you want to forgive, and ask him to change your heart toward the person who wronged you. You may want to consider voicing forgiveness to your offender either vocally or through a letter. But again, if this isn't possible, it doesn't mean you haven't expressed forgiveness.
- 7. Continue to forgive.** If the wound was deep, you'll probably have to forgive more than once. When memories of the wrong come to mind and you find yourself getting worked up over it, immediately go to God in prayer.
- 8. Pray for the one who hurt you.** It may be impossible to restore a relationship with your offender. For example, you don't know where the person lives or contacting this person could be a safety risk. But you can pray for the one who hurt you. Ask God to reveal his love to your offender. Doing so will help you to release any remaining resentment.