

## Things to Remember about Forgiveness

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- ✚ Forgiveness is a voluntary act in which you make a decision - a choice about how you will deal with an event concerning the past. Although you have a right to your resentment, **you choose** to overcome it. This involves recognizing how your attitudes and beliefs color the actual situation. We form our attitudes and beliefs based on our judgments and perceptions. Judgments and perceptions are based on our fears and needs at the time of the event. They are not facts, although we want to interpret them as such. Forgiveness is a process that shows you how to heal emotional pain by choosing to see the person who caused the pain differently. It is about seeing the humanness in others, seeing beyond their surface actions and realizing their pain that causes such actions.
- ✚ Because forgiveness is about our inner healing, it is not dependent on an apology from someone else, otherwise we would be trapped in a state of unforgiveness, experiencing prolonged pain and anger. Making the choice to forgive is part of the healing process that only comes from within.
- ✚ Forgiveness is not pardoning. To forgive the wrongdoer does not mean that we abolish the punishment for what was done.
- ✚ Forgiveness is not condoning. Certain behaviors such as unprovoked violence, abuse and aggression are totally unacceptable. Forgiveness does not mean that you support behaviors that cause pain to yourself or others. It does not mean that you don't take action to change a situation or protect yourself or others. We do not have to accept someone else's behavior in order to forgive.
- ✚ Forgiveness is not reconciliation. forgiveness is a personal internal release that only involves oneself. Forgiveness may be a necessary step in bringing people together to reconcile and includes a willingness to reconciliation, but it only involves ourselves. Reconciliation is a coming together of two or more people. We can forgive someone, but it does not mean we have to reconcile. We can forgive someone, but it does not mean we have to reconcile.
- ✚ Forgiveness is not about weakness and giving into the "strengths" of others. Forgiveness is about finding the strength in ourselves to see beyond the immediate harm inflicted upon us by others (and even ourselves), discovering the weaknesses that cause harm, and forgiving those shortcomings.