

## ***The Seven Step Program for Letting go of Anger and Bitterness***

***From "Finding Forgiveness: A 7Step Program for Letting go of Anger and Bitterness  
by Dr. Eileen R. Borris-Dunchunstang- Published by McGraw-Hill***

### **Step One – Becoming Clear**

Before we can actually begin the work of forgiveness we need to prepare ourselves by understanding what forgiveness means.

- ✚ Remember forgiveness focuses on your ***inner healing*** and is not necessarily about an outward behavior. It is not about letting someone else off the hook.
- ✚ You are releasing ***your*** emotional pain so you can have a happier and more fulfilling life. Part of becoming clear about what forgiveness is involves the acknowledgement of our need for revenge.
- ✚ If you understand the true meaning of forgiveness and realize that revenge will not get you what you really want then you have set the stage for forgiveness to happen.

### **Step Two – Telling Your Story**

Step Two is about sharing your story with those you trust. You begin with what is inside of you right now. For most of us we are feeling some very strong emotions and the need for revenge may still be lurking not far behind.

- ✚ Tell your story as completely and with as much depth and detail as possible.
- ✚ It is important to bring all the pieces together including what you felt, the meaning of the event both to you and to the important people around you

### **Step Three – Working With Anger**

- ✚ Anger tells us that our circumstances need to change and if we can't let go of our anger it is also telling us that *we* need to change.
- ✚ Instead of seeing the situation as the good guy versus the bad guy, we would be better served to learn the lessons our emotions are trying to teach us and to understand what is

### **Step Four – Working with Guilt**

- ✚ As soon as something happens to us we can only see the situation through *our* negative thinking caused by our guilt. Until we recognize what we are doing we will continue to blame others and have a distorted view of what is actually happening.
- ✚ We heal guilt by taking responsibility for our choices.

### **Step Five – Reframe the Situation**

- ✚ Now we are ready to think about the other person who needs forgiveness and *not* the incident or the pain it has caused you.
- ✚ We recognize that outward appearances don't tell the entire story of what is inside a person. We shift our focus from ourselves to thinking about the other person.
- ✚ We begin to ask the question “Why did *this* person behave in a certain way?” What life events brought this person to do this particular act at this particular time?

### **Step Six – Absorbing Pain**

- ✚ To release pain we need to grieve, especially for the loss the offense has brought be it the loss of innocence or some ending which needs to be mourned.

- ✚ Mourning means that we will have to live tomorrow differently than before usually with a void to fill. This is the time we give ourselves permission to cry.

### **Step Seven – Gaining Inner Peace**

- ✚ In Step Seven the spiritual self is awakened setting the stage for a transformation to take place which only forgiveness can bring.

### **Some Final Comments**

- ✚ Forgiveness is the science of the heart.

- ✚ It is the anchoring of a new wisdom rooted in compassion.

- ✚ Gregg Braden in his book “Walking Between the Worlds: The Science of Compassion” (1997) eloquently describes the opportunity forgiveness brings to all of us.

“Without exception, each event, every relationship, every love and every betrayal that you have ever experienced has provided you key emotions and feelings leading to your mastery. How you perceive those emotions and feelings, how you define them in your life, is your way of training and teaching yourself, reminding yourself of the promise of compassion.”

We are the ones who determine how much anger and hatred we will experience in our lives as well as how much compassion and forgiveness we will extend to others. We have been given opportunities to hate and the wisdom to transcend our hate. Think of the personal power one must have to move beyond old choices and to respond to life from a place of spiritual wisdom. Our pain and suffering is what provides us with the chance to learn how to forgive and to know our truest most beautiful nature. Forgiveness is the gift given to us to transcend our darkness and like alchemy turns it to gold.

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