FORGIVENESS FREER

"To forgive is one of the greatest gifts to yourself."

There's another dimension to the self-kindness mindset that's at least as important to get unstuck and accelerate your personal growth. In a word: forgiveness.

Much like kindness, the natural inclination about forgiveness is about others. But forgiveness in the context of self-kindness isn't about them, it's about you. People wrong us all the time. Holding that negativity allows that wound to persist. It's may sound ironic, but our forgiving others stops them from hurting us further.

Do you have certain resentments toward others? There are certain reasons why you've not forgiven them, primarily that you feel they don't deserve it. You're probably right.

In this case, forgiveness is solely within you, which is to say it may not necessitate a conversation with whomever else. Then again, if this is an active relationship, maybe a romantic one, and you're both rehashing old arguments all the time, it may be time to let it all go. Like, are you really with someone to be hating on one another all the time? That hurts you. Closing open wounds are almost always worth it. Scorecards kill relationships.

It's time to confront yourself. Is ego getting in the way? Maybe you're the one who did the wronging. Do you need to make amends? Yes, it often takes two. If saying "I'm sorry" is that hard, then agree to disagree about the issue and then agree to forgive one another. Period. While on topic, confront why saying "I'm sorry" is sapping your own happiness.

And then there are grudges. Is that lost friend or estranged family member worth it to never talk to again for whatever reason? Are you sure the reasons are good enough? Whether that resentment is toward a neighbor, colleague, co-worker, family member or your romantic partner, why do that to yourself as well as them? Consider getting out of your own way and offering that apology you've found so hard to give.

In short, self-kindness is about unburdening yourself. This too will strengthen your ability to live in the present and rid yourself of negativity. Put yourself first by realizing not just how this harms you, but how much better your life will be by hitting that reset button however it applies. Life is too precious, and this world is too extraordinary to let anything pass you by.

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ACTIVITY: 1 – GRUDGE INVENTORY (TIME: 10-15 MINUTES)

Alright fess up. Who's in your crosshairs? What's that thorn in your side? This is as straightforward as it gets. Grab a piece a paper, spiral notebook, your journal or electronic device. Make the list. Who has wronged you? For WHAT are you not forgiving anyone? With whom have you severed ties? Don't hold back. In fact, you may have to dig deeper here because you may have suppressed certain resentments. Old flames, coworkers bosses, family members… keep going. Then, without feeling the need to write an essay, make note of why this person and those residual feelings remain stuck in your crawl.

ACTIVITY: 2 – FREE YOURSELF (TIME: 15-30 MINUTES)

This is a two-parter. First, review that Grudge Inventory of yours and work your way through the easy ones. Even if that hurt and anger has a slight linger, now is the time to flat-out choose to let go. Remind yourself that this is about your own well-being and not letting others harm you by holding onto that negativity. Your decision has to reach below the surface. This exercise isn't a cognitive thought, it's about experiencing that feeling and truly letting go. If you need a cathartic release, then write a letter to get it out, set fire to it. Scream it out. Run it out. Get it out. Do whatever it takes.

Part Two: Once you've made your way through the easy ones, see who's still on that hit list. Hopefully it's blank. If not, then choose the next most essential act of forgiveness, which is to say can have the greatest benefit to you. In the event multiple names remain, choose only one. This at least has to be a phone call or video chat. Bite the bullet and just do it anyway. Your minimum goal is to find peace within and for yourself. Ideally, it turns into a reconciliation the re-enriches your life. Once you experience how that first choice works out, your next goal is to gain the motivation to keeping going through that list until it's fully released.

Holding on to the slightest negativity diminishes your joy that much more. The word exorcism may seem a little excessive. But if you apply it without the religious overtone, you're close to the ultimate goal of forgiveness.

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