

Learning to Forgive

Forgiving someone who has hurt you deeply is one of life's more difficult challenges. An inability to forgive often leads to anger, resentment, and bitterness.

Choosing to forgive someone can make a significant difference in your emotional and mental life. Letting go of past pain allows room for new ideas and frees energy that can be channeled into achieving goals and dreams.

If you find forgiveness difficult, try these tips:

- ▶ List the people with whom you have conflicts or unresolved issues. Consider if you are ready to let go of the anger you feel toward each of them.
- ▶ If you are struggling to forgive someone, consider having them over for dinner or calling them on the phone. Explain that you would like to clear the air. Focus on obtaining perspective on the events that caused the conflict, not on assigning blame.
- ▶ If a person on your list is no longer living or is impossible to reach, write a letter to him or her. Explain what hurt you and why you are having difficulty with forgiveness. Putting your feelings into words may help ease your anger.

Finding a sense of inner peace may also help you to forgive others. Some ways to do this include:



- ▶ **Exercise.** Physical activity will help you release tension. It's also a good way to process feelings and mentally recharge.
- ▶ **Focus on your spirituality.** Meditation, prayer, and other forms of spiritual practice may help you put feelings of anger and hurt in perspective.
- ▶ **Forgive yourself.** Consider if at least some of the anger you're feeling is directed inward. If you feel ashamed or embarrassed, think about what you can do to make amends, not just to others, but to yourself. Acknowledge the mistakes you've made and look for ways to let go of hurt, betrayal, and other painful feelings.

For more suggestions on how to let go of difficult memories and forgive others, contact LifeMatters. Help is available 24/7/365.

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