

# Forgiveness Practice

True, deep emotional forgiveness can't be willed. It is something to be cultivated through contemplative practices and heart-mind practices like this one. As with all the heart-mind practices, you will need to repeat this forgiveness practice to create the neural structures for forgiveness.

1. Get comfortable, upright if you want, relaxed, and alert.
2. Now get centered and still. Focus on your breath. Take a few deep breaths. Inhale slowly and deeply deeply. Exhale slowly and gently. Let these be full, conscious, deep breaths. Let go of tension with the outbreath. Let the shoulders drop. Let the eyes and face be soft.
3. Close your eyes if you feel comfortable doing so.
4. Let the mind settle on the breath. As thoughts arise, note them, and return your attention to the breath, over and over.
5. Now bring to mind the intention to forgive yourself and others. Sense the pain of condemnation of yourself and others. Sense the pain of resentment, bitterness, and hatred. Sense the pain of guilt, regret, remorse, and shame. Wish for yourself a release of these pains and for a peaceful heart.
6. Now bring to mind where you have caused injury to another person. Or where you continue to hurt someone. Sense the realness of that person's hurt. Sense the ways you have hurt them, abandoned them, or betrayed them. Sense what it is like to perceive the hurt you have caused the other person. Note what it feels like in your body, in your gut, in your heart. Note feelings of shame, regret, guilt, and remorse.
7. Sense what it is like to perceive the hurt you have caused the other person. Note what it feels like in your body, in your gut, in your heart. Note feelings of shame, regret, guilt, and remorse.

## Forgiveness Practice

8. Now, in your mind, ask this person for their forgiveness. “I see your pain that I caused. I see the many ways I have hurt you, harmed you, betrayed you, abandoned you, and caused you suffering, out of my own hurt, fear, confusion, anger, and misunderstanding. In this moment, I ask your forgiveness. I ask your forgiveness. Please forgive me. May I be forgiven.”
9. Sense in your heart if there is a willingness to feel forgiven. What would that be like? Then sense the possibility of forgiving yourself. Feel the movement of the heart that is willing to ask for forgiveness and to receive it. Feel the tears and regret.
10. Now attend to and inquire into your past hurtful behaviors. What was the hurt, urge, need, pain, confusion, or lack of awareness behind your harmful actions? Look deeply into the center of your pain.
11. Now offer forgiveness inwardly to yourself. Whisper “Forgiven, forgiven.” Show yourself kind understanding. Show yourself compassion for your pain, ignorance, and lack of skill.
12. Now imagine a mother holding her beloved only child. Hold yourself with the same tender compassion, forgiveness, and mercy. Say to yourself, “I forgive myself. I forgive myself.”
13. Now visualize someone loving offering you forgiveness. It could be someone you know or a divine loving being. Imagine them saying to you, “Forgiven, forgiven.”
14. Now bring to mind where you have caused injury to yourself. Or where you continue to hurt yourself. Sense the realness of your hurt. Sense the ways you have hurt yourself, abandoned yourself, or betrayed yourself.

## Forgiveness Practice

15. Sense what it is like to perceive the hurt you have caused yourself. Note what it feels like in your body, in your gut, in your heart. Note feelings of shame, regret, guilt, and remorse.
16. Now, in your mind, ask yourself for your forgiveness. Say to yourself, “I see your pain that I caused. I see the many ways I have hurt you, harmed you, betrayed you, abandoned you, and caused you suffering, out of my own hurt, fear, confusion, anger, and misunderstanding. In this moment, I ask for my forgiveness. I ask for my forgiveness. Please forgive me. May I be forgiven.”
17. Sense in your heart if there is a willingness to feel forgiven. What would that be like? Then sense the possibility of forgiving yourself. Feel the movement of the heart that is willing to ask for forgiveness and to receive it. Feel the tears and regret.
18. Attend to and inquire into your past hurtful behaviors. What was the hurt, urge, need, pain, confusion, or lack of awareness behind your harmful actions?
19. Now again offer forgiveness inwardly to yourself. Whisper “Forgiven, forgiven.” Show yourself kind understanding. Show yourself compassion for your pain, ignorance, and lack of skill.
20. Now imagine a mother holding her beloved only child. Hold yourself with the same tender compassion, forgiveness, and mercy. Again, say to yourself, “I forgive myself. I forgive myself.”
21. Now visualize someone loving offering you forgiveness. It could be someone you know or a divine loving being. Imagine them saying to you, “Forgiven, forgiven.”

## Forgiveness Practice

22. Now bring to mind where you have been injured by another person.
23. Let the particulars come to mind. They could be betrayal, neglect, abuse, abandonment, misunderstanding, criticism, or rejection. Notice what is going on in your body. What do you feel in your heart? What do you feel in your gut? What do you feel in other parts of your body? Note the feelings that arise. Is there hatred, anger, hurt, sadness, or shame? Let the feelings be as full as they want to be. Offer as kind a presence as possible to your woundedness. Put your hand to your heart if you wish. Attend to the place that hurts. Show yourself care. You might say, “I’m sorry. I love you.” Feel your care for your own being.
24. With kindness for yourself, look at the other person’s behavior. See if you can sense their vulnerability, their hurt, their ignorance, their anger, their need, their wants, or their lack of skill. What might be true for this person?
25. Now say, “There are many ways in which others have hurt and harmed me. Everyone of us has been abandoned, betrayed, and hurt by others. I feel the sorrows I carry. I feel the many ways others have hurt me, betrayed me, and caused me pain. To the extent that I am ready, I turn my heart in the direction of forgiveness. To the extent that I am ready, I forgive you. I will not carry the pain of hating you in my heart. I release you. To the extent that I am ready, I forgive you.
26. Feel the movement of the heart that is willing to forgive. Feel the tears and the hurt. Let yourself feel the lightening of the heart or feel that you are not yet ready to forgive. In either case, honor what is.
27. Send a message to the person that hurt you: “I see and feel the pain you caused me. It is my intention to forgive you. If you are ready, say “I forgive you now.”

## Forgiveness Practice

28. Now let go of ideas of others and of the past. Get present with your breath. Note what you are feeling. Honor wherever you are right now. Honor whatever is going on right now.
29. When you are ready, open your eyes. Make an intention to go forth about the rest of your day with a loving and forgiving heart.

As with the other heart-mind practices, don't be concerned if you don't experience the feeling of forgiveness right away; it will come with practice and repetition. Instead, just focus on having the intention to forgive yourself and others; the feelings will eventually follow.

© 2021 Michael McGee