

A Forgiveness Practice

Forgiveness from others, forgiveness for yourself, forgiveness for those who have hurt or harmed you

I have found the following practice truly helpful and liberating . . .

Let yourself sit comfortably, allowing your eyes to close gently and letting your breath be natural and easy. Let your body and mind relax. When you are ready to begin, become aware of your breath and breathe for a few minutes as if you are breathing gently in and out of your heart. Now let yourself feel the emotions you still carry and the barriers you have erected within your heart because you have not forgiven – not forgiven yourself, not forgiven others. Let yourself feel the pain and constriction of keeping your heart closed. As you breathe gently, follow these three steps of the practice of forgiveness . . .

First, is ***forgiveness from others:***

There are many ways that I have hurt and harmed others, betrayed them, abandoned them, caused them suffering or pain, knowingly or unknowingly, out of my own pain, fear, hurt, anger, and confusion. Let yourself remember and visualize the ways you have caused harm and hurt others. See and feel the pain you have caused out of your own fear and confusion. Allow yourself to feel the genuine sorrow and regret and pain you still carry. Picture each memory that still burdens your heart. When you are ready, realize that you are finally able to release this burden and ask for forgiveness. And then to each person in your mind repeat:

*I ask for your forgiveness.
Forgive me. Please forgive me.*

As you ask for this forgiveness, gradually let yourself receive the blessing of forgiveness. Allow yourself to make amends, to let go, to move on with a heart freed from this burden. Sense that you can be forgiven.

Second, is ***forgiveness for harming yourself:***

Just as we have caused suffering to others, there are many ways that we have hurt and harmed ourselves. We hurt ourselves at the same time we hurt others. And in many other ways, we abandon and betray ourselves. Take time to remember the ways that you've caused pain and suffering to yourself. You have harmed yourself, knowingly and unknowingly, in thought or word or deed. Feel the cost of this self-betrayal. Sense the ways you judge yourself about what you've done; recognize the pain, the sorrow, and the shame that you still carry in your body, heart, and mind. Realize that you are ready to release these burdens. As you remember them, extend forgiveness for each act of harm in this simple way:

For the ways I've hurt myself, betrayed or abandoned myself, caused myself pain as I have to others at times, through action or inaction, out of fear, confusion, hurt, anger, and ignorance, I now extend forgiveness to myself. I hold myself with mercy and tenderness. I forgive myself.

Let the healing balm of forgiveness touch every part and cell of your body. Let it wash over every story and feeling you hold in your heart. Ease your mind into the great heart of forgiveness. Breathe gently and continue this practice as long as you need to.

Third, is **forgiveness for those who have hurt or harmed you:**

There are many ways that I have been harmed by others, abused, abandoned, and betrayed – knowingly or unknowingly. I remember these occasions now.

Let yourself picture and remember these many ways. Feel the pain and sorrow you still carry. Then sensing the burden of this pain you carry, resolve to release it by gradually extending your forgiveness to others as your heart is ready. When you are ready, repeat silently:

I remember the many ways others have hurt or wounded or harmed me, abandoned or betrayed me – out of their own fear and pain, out of their hurt and anger and confusion. I have carried this pain in my heart long enough. To the extent that I am ready, I offer forgiveness to those who have caused me harm. I release them, I forgive them. As best as I can, I will not put anyone out of my heart. I will release the past and start anew. While I cannot condone what they did, now in this moment, I release them. I offer them forgiveness, so that I can move on.

Let yourself gently repeat these three directions for forgiveness until you feel a release in your heart. For some great pains you may not feel a release, but only the burden and the anguish or anger you have held. Touch this softly. Be forgiving of yourself for not being ready to let go and move on. Forgiveness cannot be forced; it cannot be artificial. Simply continue the practice and let the words and images work gradually in their own way. In time you can make the forgiveness practice (meditation) a regular part of your life, letting go of the past and opening your heart to each new moment with a wise loving kindness – and so liberate your heart, as you liberate others.

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Source: Adapted from two sources. (1) http://www.5th-precept.org/html/khama_2.html (accessed January 18, 2014). The website states: *Used with the kind permission of the meditation teacher Jack Kornfield; author of the book 'A Path With Heart' published by Rider & Co; ISBN-10: 0712657800* (2) Jack Kornfield, *A Lamp in the Darkness: Illuminating the Path Through Difficult Times* (Boulder, Colorado: Sounds True, 2011).