



# Forgiveness

Communities in  
Transition

BY  
**extern**  
CHANGING LIVES EVERY DAY

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## What does forgiveness mean?

Forgiveness is a conscious, deliberate decision to let go of resentment, anger, bitterness and feelings of vengeance towards a person, group or experience that has caused you harm, emotional pain or distress.

It does not mean:

- You were not hurt
- You no longer view what happened as important
- You can ever forget what happened
- You excuse the behaviour
- You condone the behaviour
- You are back being the person you were before it happened
- Your pain is gone

Forgiveness is about acknowledging the pain and hurt you suffered but deciding you will not let that pain define you. It is a decision to let the past be what it was, to leave it as it is, imperfect and not what you wish it had been.



## Why should we forgive?

Forgiving may not be easy. The pain you feel may run deep; however it is important for your own wellbeing to try to forgive. Holding onto anger or resentment affects you, not the person that caused you the hurt and pain. Long term anger or resentment can have detrimental emotional effects as it may cause you to say or do things you would not normally be capable of, which can then impact on your relationships. There are studies that also show long term anger or resentment can have physical effects on your body such as increased blood pressure, headaches or anxiety. The more anger and resentment you walk around with, the less healthy, happy and vibrant you will be.

Just as holding onto anger or resentment can affect you, letting go of the anger or resentment benefits only you, not the other person. You should choose to forgive for your sake; by forgiving you are empowering yourself, allowing yourself to heal and lessening the grip others had on you. This will enable you to feel in control and bring you some peace.

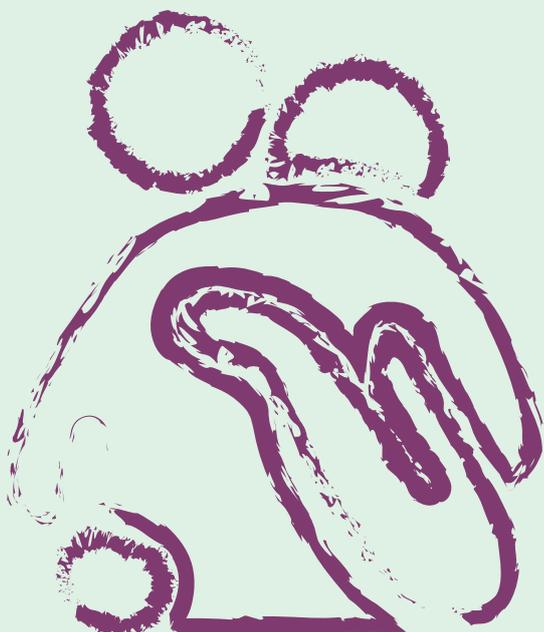


## How do we forgive?

It is important to know that forgiveness is not easy and it is not a one off event but rather a process. The length of time it will take will vary for each person but it is something you can learn to do if you commit to it.

In order to forgive you must first acknowledge what is causing you to feel the anger or resentment, and identify what is the source of this. Then you need to be aware and accept that you are much better off without anger and resentment in your life, and you deserve to free yourself from these emotions. You must then commit to forgiving.

You should start to shift your focus from others and what they have done or caused, to yourself, and the here and now. Be aware and mindful of what is happening at this very moment and avoid repeating the past or planning for the future. When you start to feel anger and resentment, label the feeling e.g. "I am feeling angry or resentful," sit with the feeling, breathe and allow the feeling to rise and fall. Practice relaxation techniques such as listening to music you enjoy, having a bath, going for a walk, breathing, and exercise. Control the anger, rather than letting the anger control you.



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