

# FORGIVE

"If you want to see the heroic, look at those who can love in return for hatred.  
If you want to see the brave, look for those who can forgive."

~ The Bhagavad-Gita

A strong relationship exists between traumatic experiences and the emergence of physical and mental health problems.

In a study done at Harvard, 91 people with various chronic pain syndromes were asked to complete several measurement questionnaires. They found that at least half of the participants in the study had strong histories of traumatic childhood events. This is a much higher percentage than in the general population.

Research is now emerging confirming what religious and philosophical teachings have acknowledged for centuries — that forgiveness has the power to restore well being.

We've found, in fact, that simply imagining oneself granting forgiveness alters physiology. An attitude of forgiveness reduces blood pressure and heart rate for instance. In studies people who are more inclined to forgive are less likely to experience symptoms of depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress. Self-forgiveness is associated with an enhanced immune system.



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Inspiring stories of forgiveness abound:

Father William Meninger describes the story of Sister Catherine. A 55 year-old nun who was undergoing treatment in the hospital, she was informed that the physician had mistakenly injected a lethal medication into her during her brain operation. Her response was to declare, “There will be no repercussions. No one is to be held at fault. I forgive without reservation anyone who may have been in any way responsible for what has happened.” She died two hours later.

We too can forgive.

Here are some ideas:

- First be willing to forgive yourself. We are generally our own harshest critics. Let go of perfectionism and cut yourself some slack.
- Remember that forgiveness is not the same as tolerance, passivity or forgetting what happened. Forgiveness is done for your benefit, not for the benefit of the one on the other end.
- Forgiveness is a process so be patient and give it some time and space.

