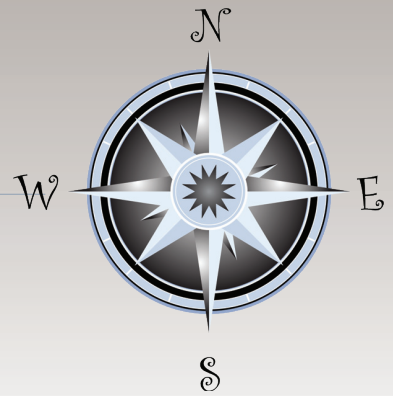


# The Courage Principle of **FORGIVENESS**



*“To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you.” – Lewis B. Smedes*

## PRINCIPLE OF THE WEEK

Forgiveness changes us from prisoners of our past to people who are at peace with our memories. It frees us to move forward with our lives. Every person has a need for forgiveness and a need to forgive. We have all wronged another person and we have all been hurt by someone else. Likewise, most of us have recognized that there are mistakes we have made that we need to forgive ourselves for. It is tempting to hold on to those feelings of anger, pain, and bitterness as a means of protecting ourselves or to punish the one that has offended us. But we will never be able to reach our potential and have true hope for the future if we cannot forgive and move on emotionally.

Forgiveness is a CHOICE that we make that is independent of our feelings. As human beings, we are all designed to want justice. When you experience hurt or harm from someone’s actions or words, whether intended or not, you may begin experiencing negative feelings such as anger, confusion, sadness, and betrayal - especially when it’s someone close to you. These feelings may start out small. But if you don’t deal with them quickly, they can grow bigger and more powerful. They may even begin to crowd out positive feelings. Refusing to forgive and dwelling on the painful memories of the past will make you miserable. It holds you trapped in a past moment and in those old feelings.

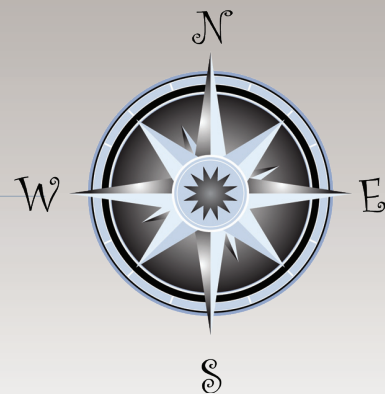
“Forgiveness is freeing up and putting to better use the energy once consumed by holding grudges, harboring resentments, and nursing unhealed wounds. It is rediscovering the strengths we always had and relocating our limitless capacity to understand and accept other people and ourselves.” (Sidney & Suzanne Simon) The way we choose to overcome our pain and hurt is what defines our character. Forgiveness is not forgetfulness, but it involves accepting the promise that the future can be more than dwelling on memories of past injury. There is no future in the past. You can never live in the present and create a new and exciting future for yourself if you always stay stuck in the past.

### Benefits

You will reap many benefits from practicing forgiveness:

- You will be at peace with your past and have hope for the future.
- You will improve your psychological well-being.
- You will have more friendships and healthier relationships with others.
- You will reduce the stress in your life. People who forgive have been found to generally have lower blood pressure and a lower heart rate. They are also less likely to suffer from chronic pain.

# Action Plan for FORGIVENESS



- You will have less hostility and you will be better at managing your anger.
- You will be at a lower risk for depression, anxiety and substance abuse.

## Characteristics

If you are a forgiving person, you will have these traits:

1. You will believe that forgiveness is your choice and does not depend on how you feel about something.
2. You will make an effort to understand and accept other people and yourself.
3. You will understand that there is no future in the past and forgiving frees you to move on with your life.
4. You will spend your time and energy focusing on the future rather than on hurtful memories of the past.

## Steps to Follow

- Set aside your pride. Do not allow pride to stop you from forgiving and moving on.
- Remember that people aren't born with the intention to inflict pain. Make an effort to understand that many things have influence over a person's behavior. Understanding can be key to forgiving and moving on.
- Make a choice to forgive.
- Realize that forgiveness is not a one time act. Depending on the severity of the pain, you may have to make the choice to

forgive the same situation multiple times.

- Be willing to seek counseling if the harm that was inflicted on you is more than what you know how to handle.

*Remember... Thoughts become actions. Actions become habits. Habits become our destiny.*

## Reflect and respond

1. In general, is it difficult for you to forgive yourself or other people?
2. What is it that causes you to hold on to hurtful memories?
3. Have you noticed how holding on to unforgiveness hurts you?
4. Will you make the choice to forgive?

Evaluate yourself from 1 to 10	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Why did you give yourself this rating										
What benefits will you obtain by raising your rating?										
What specific action can you put into practice to test the benefits of this principle?										
Check list for the daily reading of this principle	M	T	W	T	F	S	S			

Completed

Not completed