



## “FORGIVENESS”

Often when we approach clients about the concept of forgiveness there is confusion and resistance. Forgiving does not mean:

- denying the offense
- condoning the offender’s actions,
- letting them “off the hook’ or preventing consequences of actions
- reconciling the relationship
- or even trusting that person again.

Sometimes people resist forgiving because they think they will be vulnerable or walked on again, as if the bitterness or resentment keeps them safe.

It is quite natural to feel anger, hurt or resentment when struggling with an offense. People who have lost loved ones through the irresponsible actions of others, had marriages broken through adultery and children who have been the victim of abuse all present with a mountain of pain and resentment. While an experienced and caring counselor can help heal these hurts, often the lingering and seemingly intractable root of bitterness remains. The ego wants us to hold onto this as a right, when in reality it is an emotional and spiritual anvil, prohibiting total freedom and healing. Resentment creates a bond of negative energy to the offender “Holding unforgiveness is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die” Even if you are not interacting with the offender, resentment and hurt from past relationships can impact your current ones. It can even create depression, anxiety and psychosomatic illness.

Now that you have recognized that holding resentment is hurting yourself, perhaps you are wondering how to release it. Prayer, meditation, guided imagery and symbolic intentions are all pathways for healing. While forgiving begins with a choice, it is also a process. This holds true even if the person you need to forgive is yourself. Many people find it is easier to receive forgiveness from God or to forgive others than it is to extend this grace to themselves. Considering you are the person you spend the most time with and the truth that you can't give away what you don't have-forgiving yourself is the best choice. To forgive is to offer the highest form of love and grace, and immeasurably more will come back to you.

*“Forgiveness does not change the past, but it does enlarge the future” - Paul Boese*