



NINE STEPS OF FORGIVENESS

The practice of forgiveness has been shown to reduce anger, hurt, depression and stress and leads to greater feelings of hope, peace, compassion, and self-confidence. Practicing forgiveness leads to healthy relationships as well as physical health. It also influences our attitude which opens the heart to kindness, beauty, and love. Grab paper and pen and find a comfy spot and start writing.

1. **Know exactly how you feel about what happened.** Write down every feeling you're experiencing about the situation. Use the Gerrod Parrot Emotions & Feelings chart on the next page to help identify all emotions and feelings. Articulate what is not OK about the situation. Then, share your experience with a couple of trusted people to receive support, validation and feedback.
2. **Make a commitment to yourself by writing what you need to do to feel better.** Understand that forgiveness is something you do for *yourself*, not for anyone else. It's a powerful act of self-love and healing.
3. **Acknowledge what forgiveness *is* and what it *is not*.** Forgiveness does not necessarily mean reconciliation with the offending person(s). It does not mean that you condone the actions or offenses. The mere fact that you seek to forgive implies that you experienced harm or hurt on some level by another person(s), which was not OK with you. Forgiveness means inner peace for you. And this is the benefit of doing the work of forgiveness. And it is work. We define forgiveness as "peace and understanding that results from processing hurt and pain and releasing blame." We let go of expecting an apology, amends, or tangible or intangible restitution. In short, we let go of them owing us anything, and we let go of revenge. We will know we are in the process of forgiving when we feel peace increase, we take the life experience less personally, and we change our "grievance story" or stop repeating the grievance story. Instead, it has become a learning lesson and possibly a blessing.
4. **Get perspective on what is happening.** Recognize that your primary distress is coming from the hurt feelings, thoughts, and physical upset you are suffering now, not from what offended or hurt you two minutes or ten years ago. Write down possible beliefs or thinking patterns that have been activated that could exacerbate your distress over this situation. Use our [HANDOUTS Tab](#) at InsightMaximizers.com for resources on limiting beliefs, distorted thinking patterns, and irrational beliefs. Forgiveness is a powerful tool that helps to heal old and new hurt feelings.
5. **Write down what you will do if you feel upset.** Choose a technique that will soothe your body's flight or fight response, such as breathing or a simple stress management technique. Feel free to use your own personal technique or our [PAUSE plan](#) that you can find on the HANDOUTS Tab in InsightMaximizers.com.
6. **Write about ways you can give up expecting things from others that they do not choose to give you.** Recognize any "unenforceable rules" you have about how you or others must behave. Write about your personal boundaries and how you will uphold them. What will you do if they are tested or violated? What feels right for you? Write your vision for your life, your hopes, and dreams, vowing to put in place a plan, and to start working your plan. *If it's for you, it's up to you.*
7. **Set an intention to "stop and swap."** Replace the mental replays of a hurt by redirecting your energy and seeking new ways to get what you want. **Stop** obsessing over the experience that has hurt you and **swap** it with ways to meet your needs and achieve your goals. Twelve step programs suggest praying for anyone that we resent to have all the things we want in our lives, such as love, health, peace, joy, success, etc. Even if you don't want to do this, try it anyway!
8. **Write your gratitude list for your life today.** You'll note the love, beauty, kindness, health, prosperity, and peace that you enjoy this day. Remember that a life well lived is your best revenge. Letting go of the focus on your wounded feelings is forgiveness. Forgiveness is personal power.
9. **Amend your grievance story to remind you of your heroic choice to forgive.** And vow to celebrate your big WIN in a unique way!

Adapted from <https://learningtoforgive.com/9-steps/>



Here is a deeper list of emotions as described in Parrott (2001), where emotions were categorized into a short tree structure.

| | Primary Feeling | Secondary Feeling |
|------------------------|-----------------|--|
| Primary Emotion | | |
| Innate | Learned | Learned |
| Love | Affection | Adoration, affection, <i>love</i> , fondness, liking, attraction, caring, tenderness, compassion, sentimentality |
| | Lust | Arousal, desire, lust, passion, infatuation |
| | Longing | Longing |
| Joy | Cheerfulness | Amusement, bliss, cheerfulness, gaiety, glee, jolliness, joviality, <i>joy</i> , delight, enjoyment, gladness, happiness, jubilation, elation, satisfaction, ecstasy, euphoria |
| | Zest | Enthusiasm, zeal, zest, excitement, thrill, exhilaration |
| | Contentment | Contentment, pleasure |
| | Pride | Pride, triumph |
| | Optimism | Eagerness, hope, optimism |
| | Enthrallment | Enthrallment, rapture |
| | Relief | Relief |
| Surprise | Surprise | Amazement, <i>surprise</i> , astonishment |
| Anger | Irritation | Aggravation, irritation, agitation, annoyance, grouchiness, grumpiness |
| | Exasperation | Exasperation, frustration |
| | Rage | <i>Anger</i> , rage, outrage, fury, wrath, hostility, ferocity, bitterness, hate, loathing, scorn, spite, vengefulness, dislike, resentment |
| | Disgust | Disgust, revulsion, contempt |
| | Envy | Envy, jealousy |
| | Torment | Torment |
| Sadness | Suffering | Agony, suffering, hurt, anguish |
| | Sadness | Depression, despair, hopelessness, gloom, glumness, <i>sadness</i> , unhappiness, grief, sorrow, woe, misery, melancholy |
| | Disappointment | Dismay, disappointment, displeasure |
| | Shame | Guilt, shame, regret, remorse |
| | Neglect | Alienation, isolation, neglect, loneliness, rejection, homesickness, defeat, dejection, insecurity, embarrassment, humiliation, insult |
| | Sympathy | Pity, sympathy |
| Fear | Horror | Alarm, shock, <i>fear</i> , fright, horror, terror, panic, hysteria, mortification |
| | Nervousness | Anxiety, nervousness, tenseness, uneasiness, apprehension, worry, distress, dread |