

# FORGIVING YOURSELF

“Reversing your treatment of the man you have wronged is better than asking his forgiveness.” Elbert Hubbard.

Let’s look at **four categories of people who are upset with themselves** based on why they are upset (guilty, ashamed, disappointed, etc.).

1. Failing at one of life’s important tasks.
2. Not taking action to help themselves or others.
3. Hurting someone else verbally, emotionally, or physically.
4. Self-destructive acts.

Self forgiveness is an aspect of interpersonal forgiveness. When looked at properly **it is actually easier than forgiving someone else**. This is because we have more power over our actions than we do for the actions of others. Interpersonal forgiveness is difficult precisely because we cannot change the way other people act. Self-forgiveness is a powerful tool in learning how to become a forgiving person. In fact, forgiving ourselves will help us when the time comes to forgive others.

A number of people in my forgiveness classes over the years have told me, “it is hard to forgive others, but it’s even harder to forgive myself.” In the beginning, I thought this was egocentric, and I largely dismissed it. After all, I was trying to teach how to forgive others. **I had no idea how to teach someone to forgive themselves.** But then it occurred to me that during my 40 years of working the AA recovery program, I knew perfectly well how to teach a person how to forgive themselves. And, it is important work, if we are to achieve peace of mind.

I have helped hundreds of men who were recovering alcoholics to repair their lives by following the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. **The 4th step of that program is: “Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.” The 5th step is, “admitted to God, into another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.”** Completing these two steps are both the most difficult and the most necessary steps on the path of recovery. **These steps are essential** to uncovering character defects. And, equally important, **they reveal the people or organizations to which we need to make amends** because of the harms we have caused them.

It is in the 9th and 10<sup>th</sup> steps where the possibility of “self forgiveness” begins to dawn on one’s consciousness. The 9th step states that a person who wishes to recover has, “made direct amends to such people wherever possible,

except when to do so would injure them or others.” The 9<sup>th</sup> step means that in order to recover, a person has to make a list of the people they have harmed. Then, in the most humbling act, they must go to that person or organization and tell them what they have done that they believe caused harm to them and ask them what it would take to put that right. This is usually accompanied by much fear, sweating, and quaking. But it is absolutely necessary!

People who follow through on this step are amazed! They have humbled themselves, asked for forgiveness, and made it plain that they would do whatever it took within their power to put right their wrongdoing. This is really stepping out in faith! The miraculous thing is that, 95% of the time they are forgiven admired for their courage, and welcomed back. Yes, sometimes they are not.

But they have done all that they could and no longer have a reason to lay blame upon themselves.

NO GUILT NEEDS TO REMAIN You are **FREE. AND HAVE, ESSENTIALLY,**  
**DONE WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE TO BE FORGIVEN, AND DONE IT YOURSELF!!**  
**YOU HAVE FORGIVEN YOURSELF**

Working on step 9 is clearing away the wreckage of the past. It's what sets free the prisoners of Guilt. It places a person on a clear path to redemption.

And, by continuing daily with step 10, “taking personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.” The path is kept clear and unencumbered.

I know this method works. I have worked at it myself for the past 40 years. I have helped literally hundreds of men follow me down the path. It is a liberating way to lead your life because it liberates you from Guilt. It allows you to experience Self- Forgiveness.

The good news is, you do not have to be an alcoholic or drug addict to practice these steps. They are clear and simple steps anyone can practice. But there are Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous groups, and their sister organizations, such as Al-Anon (for those whose lives are affected by someone they love who is addicted.) All of these are easily found on Google.

I recommend that you select a trusted friend, confidant, or clergy to assist you in this practice. You will be surprised that most clergy are very familiar with the 12 step programs and hold them in high esteem! And they know how it works!