

## GRATITUDE AND FORGIVENESS

Let's imagine that you are a mind, swimming around in the sea of life. Your essence is a collection of ideas (mostly negative) that reflect themselves in many forms. Your personality is a reflection of your ideas or beliefs. Your physical body presents to the world a sculpture of your belief system. Every cell in your body will replace itself many times in your life. The sculpture gradually changes to represent the changes in what you believe about yourself. Have you ever noticed how two people living together for a very long time gradually start to look alike as more and more they think alike? Now as you have various encounters in life, you will respond to them according to what you believe is happening. Then, of course, an experience to reinforce your belief will follow.

### *THE EXPERIENCES YOU MANUFACTURE REFLECT WHAT YOU BELIEVE.*

How then does gratitude and forgiveness fit into this? Well, during your daily swim in the sea of life, you bump into other "collections of ideas" representing themselves as bodies and personalities, and you have what is called an encounter. Now think of each of these "others" as a mirror because what you perceive about them is really a picture of what is going on in your own head. Sure, someone is really there, but his presence triggers pictures in your mind which you project onto him. Everything is a daydream. What we call awareness is only internal reverie stimulated by input from your senses (eyes, ears, etc.)

### *THERE ARE ONLY TWO LOVING EXPRESSIONS OF LIFE: GRATITUDE AND FORGIVENESS!*

When an encounter triggers a warm, comfortable feeling, this other (your mirror) is reflecting something you like about yourself. The appropriate and very important expression is gratitude. You may not recognize exactly what you like so much about this other person because the form in which you see it expressed may not reveal the content of the characteristic that is similar to yours (this is important to remember when we get farther along into forgiveness).

### *BE ALERT FOR THE BLESSINGS THAT OCCUR IN YOUR LIFE AS OPPORTUNITIES FOR GRATITUDE.*

Every positive encounter reflects the beauty within you waiting to be expressed, and gratitude is the releasing mechanism. Gratitude is essential to reinforce your awareness of your reality as love.

The flip side of that coin should start to become painfully apparent. When an encounter triggers fear in some form (anger, guilt, frustration, disappointment, annoyance, etc.) this other (your mirror) is reflecting something you don't like about yourself. Now the appropriate and very important expression is forgiveness. The negative thought that has been triggered by the outside stimulus must be recalled and replaced with another thought.

Forgiveness means simply to give one thought (negative) for another (positive). There are three essential elements to understand about forgiveness:

1. It is always difficult. It always seems to require a loss or sacrifice, but never does.
2. The mind that holds the idea is not the mind that can give it up. Help is needed.
3. It always results in a real benefit, a blessing.

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Now let's remember that your mind is full of thoughts or ideas that the world has taught you over many years. If you've bought everything the world was teaching, those ideas have become deep-seated beliefs. They are pretty negative. (Review the chapter on Belief Systems.) Even those ideas that appear to be friendly or loving, as the world teaches, are substitutes for love.

***A SUBSTITUTE FOR LOVE LEADS AWAY FROM LOVE TOWARD ITS OPPOSITE, WHICH IS FEAR.***

For example, let's say there is someone in your life that you really don't like. You are taught that when you see them in public, you should be "nice" to them (a seemingly friendly thing to do). However, "nice" is an ego substitute for love and a sick relationship is never healed by just being nice to someone.

***FORGIVENESS IS THE ONLY THING THAT CAN HEAL A SICK RELATIONSHIP.***

But the world doesn't teach you this, so the sick relationship is protected forever in conflict, safe from healing. It is the idea inside that causes the discomfort, and that's really good because you can do something about that. All attempts to change the outside stimulus as a way to relieve the discomfort in your daydream will be frustrating and ineffective. Repeated attempts can only turn your daydream into a nightmare.

***REMEMBER, THERE IS NOTHING WRONG "OUT THERE."***

Now let's look at how the three elements of forgiveness come into play. First, "It is always difficult." Not that forgiveness itself is difficult; it requires no effort at all. But the decision to forgive is always difficult. We're talking about giving up an idea; an idea

that you've accepted from the world's teachings or that you've made up yourself. In either case, because you've embraced it, it is very precious to you, and you defend it with all your power.

Remember, you are a collection of ideas, that's who you think you are. You see the world the way you do now because that's the way you believe it is. To give it up would be to say that you were wrong. Sometimes even when you know you have been wrong, and know that you would be better off to give up an old grievance, you still cling to it tenaciously. To some degree, you would have to give up how you see the world now. And that, of course, is exactly what forgiveness requires.

***FOR YOU TO GIVE UP ONE OF YOUR COLLECTION OF IDEAS WOULD CAUSE YOU TO SEE THE WHOLE WORLD DIFFERENTLY.***

Here we should note that when you witness someone doing something stupid or anti-social, and

you remain undisturbed by their behavior, that is not forgiveness. Their behavior falls within the range of your tolerance. Technically, however, if you are not able to express gratitude in a situation (because you've judged it stupid or anti-social), forgiveness is called for, and you're kidding yourself to fake acceptance. When you make the judgment that something is wrong or bad or someone has been harmed, you now have a grievance, and forgiveness is called for.

Continuing with the elements of forgiveness, "It always seems to represent a loss or sacrifice." Think of someone that has done you wrong, in some way harmed you or your friend. To imagine them getting away with it without some punishment or compensation means you lose. To let them off the hook without even an apology would be to sacrifice your righteous wrath. For instance I hear people say "I don't get angry, I get even." Or, "I can forgive, but I can never forget." As if somehow to lose the memory of that hurt would be some great loss. In a moment of sanity,

is it possible to imagine that the memory of that hurt holds absolutely no value?

I remember when I was a small boy I had a red wagon of which I was very proud. I played with it constantly. It was precious to me, and to give it up would have been a tremendous sacrifice. Then for a birthday, I was given a brand new tricycle. And when asked if I would give the wagon to a neighbor boy, I could do it with no sense of loss. Forgiveness is a process of seeing value in a new idea, which allows you to give up an old idea that you used to hold dear.

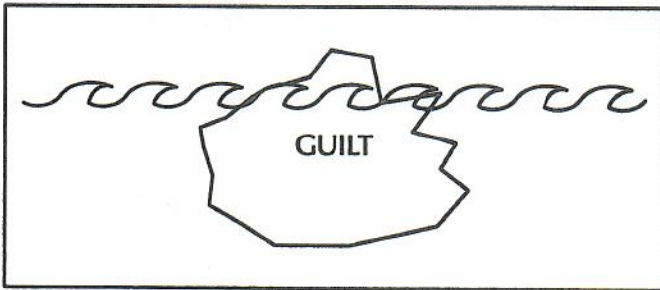
***FORGIVENESS DOES NOT ASK THAT YOU FORGET THAT SOMETHING HAPPENED.***

It simply asks you to look at what happened from another perspective, and that leads us into the second element of forgiveness.

"The mind that holds the idea is not the mind that can give it up. It needs help." It is the ego (a collection of ideas) that has processed what happened "out there," and decided that something is wrong and you've been hurt. That's one perspective, and it results in a grievance. On the other hand, your inner-vision, which knows that your reality is love and cannot be hurt, sees that nothing is wrong. The culprit (your mirror) is doing a dance, not against you but for you, to reflect an idea you hold about yourself that is detrimental to your own well being. This may be starting to sound crazy; let's try it another way.

From your collection let's pick one idea which is most pervasive and most harmful to your happiness: GUILT. Your belief in guilt causes you more fear than anything else because it calls for punishment. Therefore you want to free yourself of it more than anything

else. Imagine that this belief in guilt is like a giant iceberg floating in the ocean.



It is your idea bobbing up and down in your ocean of consciousness. Like an iceberg, ninety percent of which is below the surface of the water, the great bulk of this belief in guilt is below the level of your awareness, in your subconscious. The tip represents those little tacky things you hold against yourself which you can readily call to mind. For instance if you com-

mitted a social faux pas at a party, and were embarrassed, or maybe you stole a candy bar when you were five, and always felt a little sorry for doing it. Maybe you called in to work sick so you could go fishing, and felt pretty irresponsible all day, or maybe you were part of a big foul up, and someone else got blamed for it. Remember these examples; we'll use them again.

Now if all of the negative ideas you can remember about yourself are represented by the tip of the iceberg, imagine the tremendous amount of subconscious garbage you carry below the surface of your awareness. Maybe the tremendous inadequacy you felt as a child because you could never meet your parent's expectations, but could never clearly identify the negative feelings or the cause. Maybe, as a three year old you witnessed a big fight between your parents, and blamed yourself, and wished you had never been born, and then totally repressed it. There are thousands of reasons for disliking yourself: they go all the

way back to the first book in the Bible and the fall of Adam.

On days when you feel blue, maybe a larger portion of the iceberg of ideas is above the surface, so you are advised by the ego (the mind that holds these ideas) to go to a movie to take your mind off it or take a Valium, or anything that will help you push down the iceberg. But that doesn't rid you of the negative beliefs. It only represses them below your awareness, where they are safe to attack you at another time when you are vulnerable.

So the ego (simply a collection of ideas) which would be destroying itself by giving up one of the ideas in its collection can guide you only to cover it up or hide it, but not to give it up. You need help from your inner-vision, the mind that knows you from the perspective of your reality, which is love.

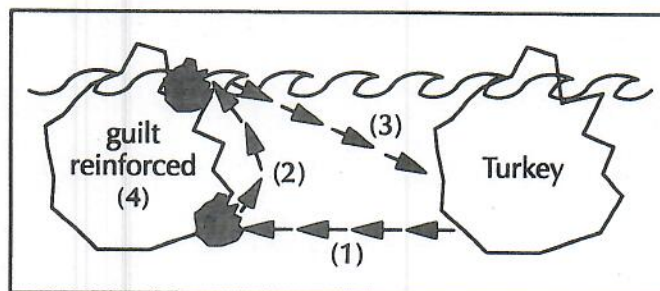
### ASKING THE EGO TO FORGIVE IS LIKE ASKING AN ARSONIST TO HELP PUT OUT A FIRE.

The program for freeing yourself from guilt could not have been planned better, but it is not without a catch. For each of the thousands of little negative thoughts you have about yourself, there is someone swimming around "out there" who will help you become aware of just the thought that you are ready to deal with at any particular time. And that thought has nothing to do with that "other" person. Your inner-vision knows you couldn't possibly deal with the whole iceberg at once. It would be too overwhelming.

So imagine there are maybe a dozen negative thoughts, any one of which you could deal with at this time. However, up to this point you have kept these thoughts successfully repressed (the ego's way to keep them safe from forgiveness). A triggering mechanism is needed to bring them to your awareness, where you can deal with them. So an "other" swims

by for whose presence you don't feel instant gratitude. You "see" something in them that you don't like (remember now, he's your mirror). He may be a drunk lying in a gutter, an irresponsible behavior you can easily criticize or condemn. The ego says, "How can this be a reflection of me? I don't even drink!" And here's the catch: because you don't relate to the form, you think it can't be reflecting thoughts about yourself. And the content of not liking yourself for times that you were irresponsible remains safely intact in your iceberg of guilt.

Here's how it works. As your turkey appears, the first indication that you have something to deal with is that you see some problem with him. (1) He pushes your button. But the problem is not with him, it is in your mind. His presence causes (2) a little chunk of guilt to rise from the repressed iceberg up into your awareness.



Your ego sees someone to dump on (3), and by so doing reinforces its position (4). You find his behavior easy to criticize or condemn. Maybe he lied to the boss, saying you were responsible for his mistake, and caused you to get fired, or he broke into your house and stole a television set. Maybe he's just a drunk lying in the gutter, or maybe he's a friend who embarrasses you by picking his nose in public.

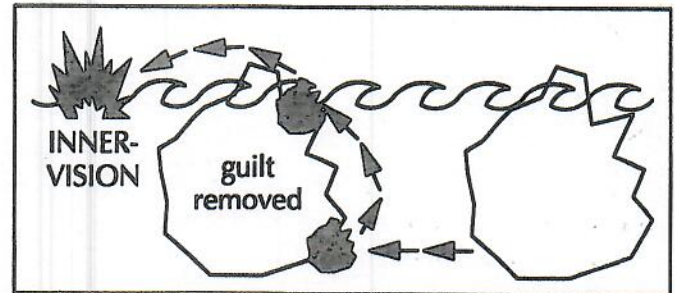
**THE EGO SAYS THE PROBLEMS IN  
YOUR LIFE ARE "OUT THERE."**

The ego's counsel is to project guilt onto him, such that if he would only change, you could be happy. He's the culprit, and you're the victim. But wait a minute! From the chapter on Love you learned that what you give away, you have. If you project guilt onto him, you're giving away guilt, and it is only reinforced in you. So following the ego's advice to try to rid yourself of guilt, you now have more, and your iceberg just got larger. So the clever ego, whose job it is to preserve itself (its collection of ideas) has tricked you into looking for the problem where it is not, and trying to fix it where you cannot.

However, your inner-vision sees an opportunity through forgiveness to free yourself of a negative idea. What if, in a moment of sanity, you say, "Inner-vision, help me see this differently."? You might hear something like this, "You are not irresponsible." If you ac-

cept and trust that idea, thoughts may continue to flow through your conscious mind like "The irresponsible drunk is your mirror, reflecting a time you acted irresponsibly, and didn't like yourself for it."

**"HIS NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR IS A CALL FOR LOVE...  
NOT JUST HIS CALL FOR LOVE, BUT ALSO  
YOURS."**



"Forgive him, see him as whole and perfect (your inner-vision's perspective) in spite of appearances."

(you may want to review the concept of "calling for love" at the end of the chapter on Perception).

To see him (your mirror) differently, and old negative thought about yourself must change (your belief that you are irresponsible). By seeing him as whole and perfect, you are extending wholeness and perfection. By extending wholeness, and perfection, it is yours. By seeing it in him, you are teaching it...to yourself. By giving it, you have it.

Now this turkey, (your mirror), who at first offended you, becomes your friend because he helped you do what you want to do more than anything else; that is to get rid of a little chunk of your self-condemnation, your repressed guilt. You don't have to hug him (love takes no form or behavior). You don't have to feed him or give him money for another bottle. You do have to see him as whole, and appreci-

ate him for helping you with the opportunity for forgiveness.

Three important things to remember: First, no higher power plants these turkeys in your path. Second, the ego can't do the forgiving. Third, the turkey carries no blame. The first thought to correct is the misconception that you are guided in some organized, pre-planned pattern.

**YOU ARE NOT GUIDED BY SOME HIGHER  
POWER TO ANY PARTICULAR EVENT OR  
CIRCUMSTANCE FOR YOUR LEARNING.**

Your own mind is quite willing to accept the random happenings in your life, and search your mental warehouse for the most suitable negative thought to eliminate through forgiveness.

Secondly, the aspect of mind that made up the grievance (the ego) cannot forgive.

***YOU CAN'T DO IT YOURSELF; FORGIVENESS  
COMES ONLY FROM YOUR INNER-VISION.***

You may have heard the statement, "You must forgive yourself before you can forgive anyone else." We need only look to the "Lord's Prayer" for a clue to how this works. "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." You can't do it by yourself. Without the turkey there to reflect your self, your self-condemnation would remain repressed, never to rise to the level of your awareness, where you can now deal with it.

Third, the turkey is totally uninvolved, is not responsible, and is usually oblivious to the whole thing.

***THE CONDEMNATION AND THE FORGIVENESS  
ALL GO ON IN YOUR OWN MIND.***

For example, we may be at a party and our friend Charlie does something considered uncouth. You may laugh, honestly seeing only humor in it. Our friend Mary may laugh nervously out of embarrass-

ment, and I may be offended. So what's the message here?

Well, for you, some expression of gratitude is appropriate for the chuckle he brought into your life. (The fact that all humor is based on pain is another issue.) For Mary and me a choice is necessary: whether to play the culprit/victim game by condemning his actions, as ego would advise, thereby reinforcing the iceberg, or ask our inner-vision to help us to see him differently, and thereby accomplish what we want to do more than anything else: free ourselves of a little chunk of our own guilt that he is reflecting.

So what's the payoff here? How does "it always result in a benefit, a blessing"? Unfortunately, no amount of wisdom can help you understand the relationship between a negative belief and a corresponding negative life experience. What I mean is that no one can say that if you feel guilty (either consciously or not) for stealing a candy bar when you were five years old, someone will break into your house and

steal a television to teach you a lesson. Or that if you successfully forgive the thief, a brand new television will miraculously appear on your doorstep. And those who have been taught that the television theft is somehow a consequence of behavior in a former life, need to search for another guru.

***NO AMOUNT OF WORLDLY LOGIC CAN CORRELATE A SPECIFIC PAIN TO A GRIEVANCE OR A SPECIFIC BLESSING TO FORGIVENESS.***

When you develop a grievance against someone, there is no way to know what negative belief, reflected in your repressed memory, will be released through forgiveness. And you cannot know what benefits of life you have been denying yourself through negative thinking. So no one can say that if you only give up hating yourself for fighting with your parents you will be successful in business. Or if you stop hating Joe for scratching your new car, you will meet a beautiful soul-mate and have a successful relationship. There

is no question that you deny yourself the health, wealth, and happiness that life offers freely. But there is no workable relationship between a particular grievance and how its release will manifest in your life.

***RECOMMENDING FORGIVENESS TO SOMEONE  
ELSE FOR SOLVING A PROBLEM IS NOT GOOD  
ADVICE.***

Though forgiveness is probably the only effective solution to a friend's problem, the recommendation from you must be rejected even if they know it is right. If their state of mind would allow them to perceive this as a solution, they would not be discussing the problem with you. They would be listening to the guidance from their own inner-vision. Their only purpose for complaining to others is to reinforce the whole thing in their own mind. The only helpful thing you can do is just listen. And if you think you have an answer to their problem, it's time for a little talk with your own inner-vision.

**THE SOLUTION TO A PROBLEM IS NEVER  
OUTSIDE THE ONE WITH THE PROBLEM.**

This is not an attack on practitioners and counselors who dedicate their lives to helping those who are hurting. I have a very high regard for professional counselors. My wife is the most effective counselor I know, because she knows she doesn't have the answers to others problems. But she can help by providing an atmosphere for healing. Because of her training, she's able to guide them toward a way of thinking that allows them to see their own answer.

Let's review this whole process.

1. You have a whole storehouse of negative thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about yourself. These ideas (although negative) are powerful in their ability to influence your experience of life. They block your ability to see the good and the beautiful that would contradict them.

2. Every encounter with an "other" is an opportunity to express either gratitude or forgiveness according to how you see them. "How you see them," or perception, is a reflection of what is going on in your mind. They are only a trigger for your thought processes. If you like someone and I don't, that person is innocent, and is merely reflecting a message for both of us. It is essential for you to express gratitude to reinforce the positive and the good awareness in your mind, and for me to express forgiveness to correct the negative.
3. You could never deal with the whole storehouse of negative beliefs at one time; it would be too overwhelming. So you are confronted by only those for which you are ready and able to deal with through forgiveness. If you don't feel capable of forgiveness when it is called for, don't worry about it; nothing is ever lost; you'll get another chance.

4. The mind that made up the grievance (negative belief) cannot correct it. You must ask your inner-vision (the part of your mind that knows the truth about you) to help you see it differently. Sincerity is essential; you must be truly willing to give up the way you see it now. The sad part is that in spite of the pain it is causing, you seldom are (because you imagine that it requires some sacrifice - which it doesn't). But if you are willing, the most incredible thing occurs. Your infinitely powerful mind, holding onto an indelible belief, changes, and you see a whole new world. And the good that was blocked by that

negative belief is free to flow into your life effortlessly.

**KARMA**

This is an appropriate place for an explanation of what is called karma, better understood as cause and effect. Thought attracts experience for its fulfillment. An unloving thought will produce an instantaneous and continuous attraction of an experience for its fulfillment, and will continue until that unloving thought is corrected. A loving thought will likewise attract an experience after its own kind forever, because it needs no correction.

**CHECKLIST**

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