

The Power of Forgiveness

TEN PEOPLE OR GROUPS YOU MAY WISH TO FORGIVE NOW

by Connie Domino, MPH, RN

1. Parents

Parents are at the top of the forgiveness list for many people. Most parents did the best they could. However, even if they didn't, you can tie up most of the energy you need to meet dreams and goals in your life by continuing to harbor anger and resentment toward your parents. Forgiveness does not mean they were correct in their actions that hurt you. Forgiveness is not something you do for others, it's something you do for yourself. It releases the hold the past has on your life, allowing you to meet your dreams and goals.

2. Spouses/Significant Others

This is a hot topic in my goal setting and forgiveness workshops. Sociologists who study the history of marriage tell us that there are at least two primary reasons so many of our marriages fail. One is that modern Americans are one of the most marrying societies in written history. We have more marriages than ever recorded leading to more divorces than in the past. In addition, marriage has been so romanticized; we may expect more from our spouses than they can possibly deliver. This unique situation requires more communication, more patience and more forgiveness than ever before.

3. Siblings, and other relatives

Most siblings experience some type of rivalry. As adults we may need some professional assistance to discern if the line was crossed between a normal amount of rivalry and whether the relationship was actually abusive. Forgiveness can provide great healing for anyone who has experienced an abusive relationship with siblings. You may need to forgive other relatives too. Maybe your children made you angry, didn't meet your expectations or never call or come to visit. Forgive your children. Life is much too short and they are much too special.

4. Friends

It can be especially painful when you have been hurt by a friend. Friends are people you have made a conscious decision to be in relationship with. The special relationship we develop with friends usually involves mutual trust. When we are betrayed by a friend, we may begin to question our ability to recognize qualities we hold dear such as loyalty and honesty. We may wonder if we possess some sort of character flaw that makes us susceptible to attracting people who take advantage of our good nature. Forgiveness is especially important to heal when we are hurt by a friend.

5. Supervisor/Boss

People who work full-time may spend more waking hours at work than at home. When at home, most people have some authority over their routine, but at work, the boss is in control. When most people join the working world, it doesn't take long to discover that a significant number of people in supervisory positions are not cut out for the job. Forgiveness, even on a daily basis, can become an important strategy for making peace with the boss.

6. Coworkers

There may be days you feel more like you are in junior high school rather than work. By the time most people are adults, they have developed set patterns for establishing their place in the tribal society we call “the workplace.” While many co-workers are actually helpful and supportive, there always seems to be at least one or two who are bent on taking the “fun” out of *dysfunctional*. If your work environment has become emotionally toxic, forgiveness can provide the scrubbing bubbles needed to clean it up.

7. Governments/public agencies and organizations

It’s easy to get mad at a non-personal entity such as a government or other public agency. It has become obvious that too many elected officials seem to have forgotten that it is the people who elected them they represent and not lobbyists and their generous donors. Those trying to receive their services may feel like another number or just a statistic. When forgiving a government or public agency it is important to remember that it is still people who make up the agency. It is still people who need to be forgiven.

8. Private businesses/agencies/organizations

As baby boomers we were taught that if we were loyal, hardworking employees that we could expect to be taken care of by our employers with frequent raises, benefits and a retirement package. My husband faithfully worked for a company for 25 years, until the leadership announced they were sending his job and others overseas. Along with many other American workers, we felt betrayed. It took my husband several years to land a job with a similar company. We had both forgiven all the people we could think of from our past and present, but had not thought of forgiving a company. When we fully forgave my husband’s company, the company he wanted hired him within two weeks. Forgiveness works when directed at individuals and just as well when directed at businesses.

9. God/ Higher Power /Religions

I am always surprised by the people who claim to be angry with God or their higher power. They believe that God should intervene constantly in human events, preventing bad things from happening to good people. They may be forgetting that it is free will that makes us distinctly human. This includes the free will to do good or the free will to get into trouble. If given the choice, I believe most people would refuse to relinquish their free will, even if it came with a guarantee of a robotic but more peaceful existence. Instead of blaming God, we need to accept responsibility for our actions and hold others accountable for their actions. Forgiveness releases the past to make way for a more positive future.

10. Yourself

Some people have a difficult time forgiving themselves. They feel guilt and shame for events long past. They blame themselves and become their own worst enemy. When you begin working on your forgiveness list, don’t forget to place yourself at the top. Forgiving yourself will lighten your burden and make it so much easier to forgive others.

*Connie Domino is an author, life coach, trainer and speaker. Her newest book is *The Law of Forgiveness: Tap in to the Positive Power of Forgiveness—and Attract Good Things to Your Life* (Berkley Books, 2009). She lives in Raleigh, NC with her husband and two children.*