

Transformation Through Forgiveness

Making Peace With Your Karma

- 1) Acknowledge the opportunity.** You are fortunate to be given to the opportunity to practice forgiveness. You are being offered a chance to heal, learn and grow and thus raise your consciousness to a level far above resentment and revenge. If you were not hurt, you would not be afforded the opportunity to forgive and thus advance further in Krishna consciousness.

Resources: Read your favorite quotes from **Quotes on Forgiveness**.

Intended result: To create a positive mind set towards the forgiveness process. To embrace the forgiveness process as a powerful opportunity to make advancement in Krishna consciousness, particularly in the areas of humility, compassion, emotional maturity and personal responsibility.

- 2) Acknowledge that you forgive the doer, not the doing.** Forgiveness doesn't mean you condone the act. Forgiveness doesn't mean a wrong act was not committed or that you must deny your feelings.

Forgiveness doesn't require that you reconcile a relationship. In addition, forgiveness doesn't prevent you from taking action against the person who hurt you if it's necessary for your and other person's safety, or necessary for the rehabilitation of your offender. Forgiveness is the removal of anger and resentment.

Intended result: To acknowledge that forgiving doesn't make a wrong a right.

- 3) Acknowledge that resentment hurts you, not your offender.** Resentment is like drinking poison and hoping the other person will die. When you have anger towards another, you carry the anger in your heart, just as when you have compassion the compassion is carried in your heart, not only in this life, but life after life.

Intended result: That the prisoner you free by forgiveness is yourself. Otherwise the person you have never forgiven has some control over your life.

- 4) Enter the process in a mood of willingness and helplessness.** Although you may feel you just can't forgive, faith that Krishna can do what you can't is fundamental to the forgiveness process. Be willing and open to allow Krsna to work through you without any resistance.

Forgiveness is not an intellectual process. It comes about by a shift in feeling and perception. You just have to be willing to "let go" of the resentment, hurt, pain, etc. Say, "I

am willing to release this." And then Krsna takes over and starts moving you towards forgiveness as long as you don't resist.

Be willing to allow Krishna to alter your perception of your resentment. Recognize you may resist because the hurt provides excuses and rationale for certain behaviors, such as the need to be right and the need to make your "offender" wrong. Have faith you will be better off, happier and more Krishna consciousness when you totally forgive.

Resources: Your favorite prayers, your own prayers, japa and kirtan, developing a deeper attitude of dependence.

Intended results: A realization of your limitations and helplessness and dependence on and faith in Krishna's ability and power to free you from your resentment. Acknowledgment of any unwillingness to let Krsna work through you to remove your resentment.

- 5) Acknowledge that forgiveness is a choice.** There is no one but you who has the full power to release your resentment. If forgiveness were not a choice, *sastra* and Srila Prabhupada would not ask us to forgive. To not choose is also a choice, the choice not to forgive.

Prabhupada was once asked what is the greatest obstacle to our spiritual advancement. He replied, "You are."

It is not a feeling-at least not at first-but rather an act of will. It is a choice to tear up the record of wrongs you have been keeping. It is easier to act your way into a new way of thinking than think your way into our new way of acting.

Forgiveness challenges you to give up your destructive thoughts about the situation and to believe in the possibility of a better future.

Intended results: The realization that you are responsible for your feelings. The behavior of another person or organization is not responsible for how you feel. To acknowledge that the thinking "I can't forgive" is a reluctance to choose to forgive and that you are the one holding onto your emotions; they do not hold you.

- 6) Acknowledge that ultimately forgiveness is not about you and them but about you and Krsna.** We practice forgiveness because we value our relationship with Krsna more than we desire to see our enemy punished.

Jaiva Dharma states: "...both *dainya* and *dayā* are naturally embodied in bhakti. *Kṣamā*, forgiveness, is a *bhāva* between *dainya* and *dayā*. When the *bhāva* of *dainya*: 'I am wretched and lowly, how could I be the judge and punisher of anyone?' mingles with the *bhāva* of *dayā* the feeling of *kṣamā* is produced. Therefore, *kṣamā* is also inherent to bhakti.

Intended result: To acknowledge that lack of forgiveness is due to material attachment and is the effect of the mode of ignorance, both of which disturb our relationship with Krsna. Krsna is pleased when we forgive.

- 7) Be willing to fully acknowledge your feelings.** Suppressing your emotions only bury them into your subconscious mind (citta) where they continue to play out while you no longer are aware of them. By acknowledging and confronting those feelings, you begin to release the negative energy those feelings carry. As long as you resist suffering an event, its memory can push your life around.

When you cut yourself off from feeling uncomfortable and hurtful feelings, we also cut ourselves off from the emotional growth that comes with having to cope with sadness and disappointment.

By connecting with your feelings, the buddhi is enabled to process them. Without confronting your feelings, the buddhi, also known as the fire of mental digestion, cannot digest those feelings.

Intended result: To confront the pent up feelings and pain, learn what they are teaching, and begin to release them and their ill effects, thus freeing up negative energy that we can use to move forward.

- 8) Tell and/or write your story.** Tell or write the story of your hurt as if you are speaking to the person who hurt you. This is how you will get in touch with your feelings. Confront and accept your feelings about what happened (how you felt when it happened, how you feel now, why you feel this way, etc). Don't hold back. Below your anger are other emotions such as sadness, disappointment, etc.

Resources: Use Level 1 and 2 of the Emotional Excavating process to more clearly identify your exact emotions that lie below your anger.

Intended result: To fully acknowledge and experience all your feelings surrounding your resentment and release the negative emotional energy attached to your resentment.

- 9) Visualize your pain.** Think of a visual image that best describes how the pain of your resentment feels. Either write it down or draw it (you may wish to act it out as well). Fully connect with the pain this image represents in your life. Then contemplate what it will be like to carry this burden throughout your life.

Intended results: To connect more deeply with the pain and negative consequences your resentment is bringing you. To acknowledge how you are punishing yourself - not your abuser -

by holding onto resentment. To focus on your pain and not on your offender. To use this pain to motivate you to move towards forgiveness.

10) Do a cost/benefit analysis. Look at what benefits you are getting by holding onto your resentment, why you are attached to those benefits, and what they are costing you.

Intended results: To isolate what is nourishing your resentment, see the reasons you are reluctant to let go, and acknowledge the negative effects holding onto your resentment is having on your life. To use this as a motivation to let go.

11) Review your beliefs surrounding your resentment. Beliefs are subjective convictions that something is true. They can be binding or liberating. Reframe any negative beliefs about your resentment that make it impossible for you to forgive into beliefs that empower you to forgive. (For example, “I can choose to forgive even if I don’t receive an apology.”)

Resources: Do the **Beliefs About Forgiveness** worksheet.

Intended result: To replace disempowering beliefs with beliefs that empower you to forgive.

12) Identify your core hurts. Write down what core hurt(s) are causing your resentment? What expectations were unmet? How were you let down? Why do these core hurts exist? How can you change them?

Resources: Level 3 of the Emotional Excavating process and the paper titled **Core Hurts and Core Needs**

Intended results: A shift from victim consciousness. Taking responsibility for your response to the situation.

13) Tell the story from your “offenders” point of view. Enter into the world of your offender to understand what might be their justification for what was done? Consider what in their past may have contributed to what they have done. Consider that they were trying their best, that they were just trying to fulfill their needs that they were not trying to hurt you.

Resources: Read **Forgiveness Quotes** under the section **Forgiveness is to Follow the Golden Rule**

Intended result: To view the original story from another angle of vision, an angle which puts your offender in a more benevolent light. To bring awareness to the subjective nature of your story and the effect that a story has on you.

14) Identify what bothers you in your offender that you find in yourself. Doing some inquiry can help you recognize how often the qualities you find unforgivable in others are qualities you reject in yourself. If you don’t have the fault in yourself, then it won’t bother you when you see it in others and instead of being disturbed you’ll feel compassion. There’s a powerful boon in recognizing how

"unforgivable" traits in others mirror the qualities you find "unforgivable" in yourself.

If you hate a person, you hate something in him that is part of yourself. What isn't a part of ourselves doesn't disturb us.—Herman Hesse

Intended results: To recognize any part of yourself that acts like this person. To see any states of mind in yourself like your offender's state of mind?

- 15 Connect with your inherent compassionate nature.** Contemplate how you would be doing in life if you were only forgiven to the degree that you forgive others. Contemplate how you would wish to be treated if you offended another. Would you wish for mercy or justice? Do you wish for justice for others but mercy for yourself. Contemplate whether or not you could have possibly done what your offender did (or something similar) if you had the same upbringing, life experiences and cultural background as them.

You wouldn't object if those who you offended prayed for your well being (and they may have done this for all I know). Therefore, certainly you should grant that same consideration and mercy to others.

If needed, use level four of Emotional Excavating aid in this process. Also, make two lists, one of what your higher self can be and the other of what your lower self (inner critic) is telling you to be.

Resources: Read **Quotes on Forgiveness** under the section **Compassion**

Intended result: To connect more deeply with that part of yourself that is compassionate and understanding.

- 16 Visualize your freedom.** Think of a visual image that best describes how being freed from your resentment would feel. Either write down or draw this image (you may wish to act it out as well). Fully connect with the freedom this imagine represents. Deeply meditate on what it would be like if your life were free of resentment.

Intended results: To deeply connect with what a Life of Forgiveness would be like. To allow this vision to motivate you to move toward forgiveness.

- 17 Connect with your higher self.** What higher self attitudes and behavior can you show to your "offender?" Use level four of Emotional Excavating aid in this process. Also, make two lists, one of what your higher self can be and the other of what your lower self (inner critic) is telling you to be.

Resources: Read **Quotes on Forgiveness** under the section **Compassion**

Intended result: To connect more deeply with that part of yourself that is compassionate and understanding.

18 God's perspective. Imagine that you are God (or Jesus, Buddha, Allah, Moses, your guru or any person you revere) and he is telling you the story as he sees it (as you imagine he might see it). What might he say about why this happened to you? What might he say about what you had to do with it? What might he say about the person you call an abuser? What might he say about what you can or are supposed to learn from this incident? What might he say about your reaction to what happened? What else might he say?

Intended results: To realize and accept that I attracted the situation and that I needed it to grow and heal, and that if I don't learn the lessons the situations brings, I will attract similar situations until I learn my lessons. To understand that these situations are divinely arranged for my benefit. To acknowledge that if you don't forgive, you are guilty of the crime of unforgiveness.

19 Appreciate. Make room in your heart to appreciate whatever good you find in your "offender."

Resources: Read **Quotes on Forgiveness** under **We Hate in Others What We Hate in Ourselves**

Intended result: To rid your heart of ill feelings toward your "offender."

20 Pray for and bless your offender. Pray for the well being of your offender in the same way that you would like to be blessed (in forgiving you are forgiven, in blessing you are blessed, in condemning you are condemned). You may also wish to serve them, even if only in your mind.

Resources: Contemplate the stories of forgiveness you heard in the seminar and in sastra.

Intended results: To awaken greater degrees of compassion. To move closer towards loving your enemy.

21 Write a letter of forgiveness (you may or may not give this to the person or organization you wish to forgive).

Resources: Use Level 6 of the emotional map to aid in this process.

Intended results: Closure and a willingness to practice forgiveness daily.

22 Review the "How Do You Know You Have Totally Forgiven" Worksheet and isolate any area you may need to further work on.

Intended results: To become aware of what obstacles, if any, you still face in moving towards complete forgiveness, and the correct behavior and attitude needed to overcome them.

23 Write or tell your story of forgiveness. Begin with your original story and describe how that story transformed to your story of forgiveness.

Resources: Use this 19 step forgiveness process to review the steps you went through and how you and your story transformed at each level.

Intended results: To review the forgiveness process so that its practices and attitudes become more engrained in your consciousness and behavior and so that you go to deeper levels of forgiveness.

At any point in this process, you may wish to do the entire “Emotional Excavating” worksheet, the “Have You Totally Forgiven?” worksheet ” the “Beliefs About Forgiveness” worksheet or the practice of prayer and chanting.