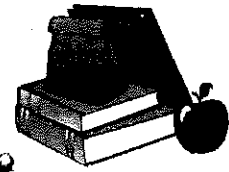


Forgiveness

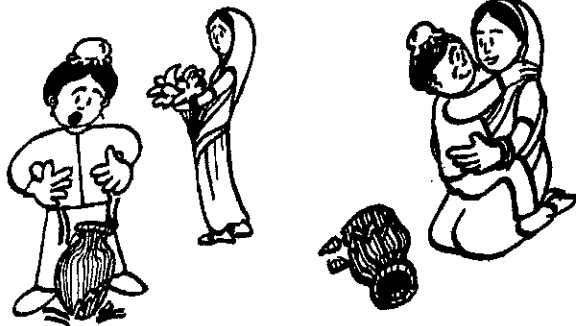


What Is Forgiveness?

Being forgiving is giving someone another chance after they have done something wrong, knowing that everyone makes mistakes. It is making amends instead of taking revenge. It is important to forgive yourself, too. Forgiving yourself means to stop punishing yourself or feeling hopeless because of a mistake. Forgiveness is moving ahead, ready to act differently, with compassion for yourself and faith that you can change.

Why Practice It?

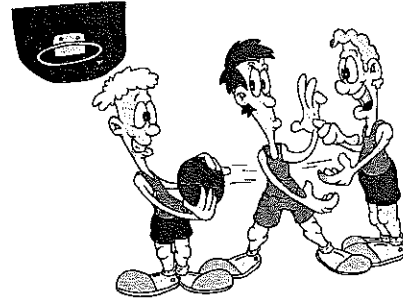
Everyone does hurtful things at one time or another. If someone is not forgiving, others feel worried around that person. Without forgiveness, we judge and criticize others instead of giving each other a chance to improve. Forgiveness is the best way to encourage ourselves and others to take responsibility for our actions, to try harder and to change for the better.



How Do You Practice It?

Forgiveness is having the courage to face a mistake that you or someone else has made. You may feel sad, guilty or angry. Let your feelings come, and then let them go, like leaves passing by in a stream. Avoid revenge. Decide what amends need to be made. If someone repeatedly hurts you, forgiving them won't help. You need to stop giving them chances to hurt you. Humbly learn from mistakes. Sometimes mistakes are our best teach-

ets.
The Virtues Project



What would Forgiveness look like if...

- Your friend accidentally broke one of your belongings?
- Your mother is late picking you up from school?
- You did something you feel is very bad?
- Your brother repeatedly takes something of yours without asking?
- A friend lost her temper at you and later apologized?
- You decide you want to stop the habit of criticizing?

Signs of Success

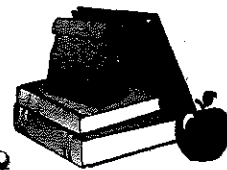
Congratulations! You are practicing Forgiveness when you...

- Remember that everyone makes mistakes
- Take responsibility for your own mistakes
- Share your feelings without taking revenge
- Stop giving uncaring people the chance to hurt you
- Accept people without judgment or criticism
- Make amends instead of punishing yourself with guilt

Affirmation

I am forgiving of others and myself. I am willing to give and receive amends. I learn from my mistakes. I have the power to keep changing for the better.

Activities with Forgiveness



Forgiveness Fire Circle

This powerful ceremony has been done with all ages, from pre-school through adult. There are alternatives without fire. If fire is not available, have each person shred their paper and release it into a basket. Have someone agree to take them and burn them.

1. Read from this Guide about the virtue of Forgiveness and say that all of us have done things we regret or are sorry for.
2. Set a boundary that silence will be kept throughout this exercise. There will be no sharing. It is to be done privately and individually. No one else will look at what we are putting on paper.
3. Pass out slips of paper and invite individuals to write or draw something they feel very guilty about. Do one yourself.
4. In a safe, outside area, have a small fire. With older children, you can invite some to be the fire makers, and some to be responsible for dousing the fire with water afterward. All is to be done in complete silence. Have wood, paper, kindling, matches available. Form a circle and say "When you are ready, release your mistake to the fire of forgiveness. If it is appropriate in your setting, say a prayer for forgiveness. "Forgive us these mistakes. Make them our teachers. Help us to replace them with new ways of being and acting."
5. Come back in and invite each person to write or draw a commitment. "I commit to..." involving a virtue and an action which will replace the mistake. It could be a form of making amends. Close with a closure and integration question "What did you appreciate about this exercise?"



Virtues Reflection Questions

- When do you find it most difficult to forgive? What blocks you from being forgiving? What would help you to replace those habits with true forgiveness?
- What virtues help you to keep from retaliating when someone hurts you?
- Name three things you could do to make amends if you break a promise to your mother?
- When a friend hurts you, what amends do you need them to make?



Drawing Forgiveness

Draw two scenes: (1) friends not being forgiving, (2) friends being forgiving.



Poster Points

- Starting over.
- A clean slate.
- Turning the other cheek.
- To err is human, to forgive, divine.



Quotable Quotes

"Forgiveness is not an occasional act, it is a permanent attitude." Martin Luther King

"It is by forgiving that one is forgiven."
Mother Teresa

"To err is human, to forgive, divine."
Alexander Pope

"One of the most important trips a man can make is in meeting the other fellow halfway."
Anonymous

"If you haven't forgiven yourself something, how can you forgive others?" Dolores Huerte