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## How do I help someone ... struggling with forgiveness?

**Forgiveness can be hard**, and sometimes it can feel like it's one of the most difficult of God's commandments, as when a grievous hurt is done towards someone, their inner world is badly disrupted, it becomes difficult for them to concentrate on anything other than their turmoil or pain. They may see it as unfair as they didn't do anything wrong, or they could be confused about why the other person did this to them, or if the person who hurt them doesn't admit wrongdoing.

As we probably know from experience, **the closer the person, like family, or friends or someone we trust, the more severe the offence and deeper the hurt**, which results in being more difficult to forgive. We expect more from them, after all, you have given more of yourself to them. These people are supposed to accept us, love us unconditionally, support us no matter what, and understand us and always be there for us and have our back. The reason people close to us can hurt us more is we feel it as a betrayal of trust and that can shake our entire world. If someone else that we don't care as much for, or a stranger, were to do the same thing, we would not feel the same hurt, and we would find it easier to forgive, as it is those that you care for are the ones that can hurt you the most.

We need to show them that blaming others and holding onto grudges will only increase **their** pain, and worst of all, it will keep festering and will spread and affect others. They can't start to recover and mend until they forgive, as **forgiveness can set them free**. The more their pain consumes them the more it will control them. We are not designed to hold onto the bitterness and resentment that comes with past hurts; forgiveness and moving on gives the freedom to be a better person. If they don't forgive, the chaos of their emotions will continue, and they will never stop replaying the situation repeatedly in their head.

**Forgiveness and letting go helps them move on with their lives**, they are able to enjoy the present and are not weighed down by their feelings and their vision isn't blurred about the wrongdoing or hurt they have experienced. **We need to encourage them to forgive and let go**, so that they aren't held hostage by the other person that has wronged them and so their heart can mend, as the power of forgiveness will free them and heal them while giving them inner peace and happiness, and when they forgive, God forgives them.

As when we heal and when we let go, we grow, and when we make peace with our past, it stops disturbing our present and future, so that we don't become a prisoner of our emotions. We all need to strive to make sure our past, makes us better, not bitter.

### STEPS ON HOW TO ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO FORGIVE

**Remind them how good our God is.** We need to remind them that, God is a Father of compassion and comfort, so He understands their struggles as they navigate forgiveness, and **God sees all of their hurt and is close to the broken hearted** (Psalm 31:18-19), we need to remind them when we hand our broken heart to God, He renews our strength, and He heals us (Psalm 147:3). Also remind them that God is always with them, even unto the end (Psalm 48:14), and that He hears their prayers and has seen their tears and **assures us all He will heal us** (Psalm 20:3). We need to encourage them to empty their hearts of bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, slander, and all forms

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of malice so that they can properly reflect with their words and actions the beautiful traits of kindness, tenderness and forgiveness (Ephesians 3:14-19).

**Show them empathy.** We need to show **empathy and understanding** towards someone that is struggling with the act of forgiveness, due to someone having wronged and hurt them, we need to be non-judgemental and listen to their feelings, while explaining that we understand that this person has been hurt by someone but **explaining gently the reasons that they need to forgive**. We are not to take sides, so that we don't feed their bitterness and hurt, we are there to help them forgive and let go. As only God knows the whole story, and we need to encourage them to leave it to God to work it out for them.

**Encourage them to ask God to help.** Due to our human nature finding forgiveness at times can be nearly impossible, we need to ask our Heavenly Father to help us to have a forgiving heart and let go of our pain, anger, and resentment. We need to encourage them to give their burdens to the Lord, and he will take care of them (Psalm 55:22).

**Encourage them to pray for the other person.** We are told we need to pray for those who have wronged us. As when we pray for others, it helps pave the way for true freedom and forgiveness, as it releases us from the captivity of our own misery. Encourage them to follow the instructions given in Matt 5:44, to pray for them which despitefully use us, those who hate and persecute us, and we are also told to love our enemies.

**Encourage them to forgive and let go.**

When we choose to forgive, we can let go, by **leaving it in God's hands**. This lets them heal and have peace

rather than being consumed with the emotional feeling that can weigh them down. In Philippians 3:13-14, the word forgetting, means no longer caring for, neglecting, refusing to focus on. **Paul is not advising a memory wipe**; he is telling us to focus on the present and the future, rather than the past, when we hold on to hurt, we are emotionally and cognitively hobbled, and our relationships suffer, and we become prisoners of our feelings and emotions, we need to encourage them to do this and we could also encourage them to write a letter or email to the person that has wronged them, **BUT not sending it**, this allows them to put it down on paper to help with this process and release any negative feeling or thoughts they may have.

**Encourage them to let go and leave it in God's hands.** God instructs us to let go and leave it in His hands, so we can move forward without the weight of our negative emotions. We need to encourage them to forgive and let go of their hurt and **leave it to God to handle the situation** and encourage them to trust God's judgement to handle it, so they are be able to live in peace and to



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leave it unto God's wrath, for God says, avenge not yourselves, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay it" (Romans 12:19).

**Explain what forgiveness is not.** We need to assure them forgiveness is not approving, excusing, justifying, pardoning, or condoning behaviour, it is not blindness to what they did or them refusing to take what they did as serious, it also isn't pretending it didn't hurt. Explain to them it doesn't mean that when you forgive, all their feelings and emotions attached to the situation will automatically disappear. The process of forgiveness can take time, but it can free them from the bitterness and anger.

**Encourage reconciliation.** This is encouraged and is a desired outcome when possible (Romans 12:18). There are situations that may be too dangerous emotionally, physically, and spiritually which can make it impossible, so this step may not always be possible (2 Timothy 3:1-5),

**They may need to put in boundaries.** This may be needed to help them move on with their life, and it may be so that they can continue to treat the other person with respect, so that they can have some kind of relationship with them.

**They may need to seek professional help.** Sometimes we might not be able to understand what has happened, so it can be helpful to reach out and speak to a professional counsellor educated on these issues.

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**For more articles on forgiveness, please see the Adelphicare website.**

Talks and summaries on Forgiveness, by Steve Hyndman –

<https://www.adelphicare.org/pages/forgiveness.html>

Practical Perspectives, by Laurence Lepherd and Kylee Mingham –

<https://www.adelphicare.org/documents/108-forgiveness-LL.pdf>

<https://www.adelphicare.org/documents/107-forgiveness-KM.pdf>

Forgiveness – "Saying 'I'm sorry' just isn't enough", by Judy Palmer –

<https://www.adelphicare.org/documents/067-forgiveness.pdf>

