

FORGIVENESS

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Forgiveness and Health

Can you see the relationship between forgiveness and health? The fact is that after you have been hurt, humiliated, angry, suffered fear or loss, real or false guilt, or envy etc., the unforgiveness, the blocked love flow, profoundly affects the way your body functions, and thus your health. This is mediated by alterations in the patterns of chemicals and electricity in your body.

For example, your muscles may tighten, causing imbalances or pain in your neck, back and limbs. Headaches may occur. There is decreased blood flow to the joint surfaces. This makes it more difficult for the blood to remove wastes from the tissues. It reduces the supply of oxygen and nutrients to the cells. This increases the likelihood of delayed or inadequate repair during sleep, impairing recovery from injury, arthritis, etc. Your teeth clench at night contributing to problems with your teeth and jaw joints. Injury through inattention, accident, or violence is more likely. The peptide and hormonal chemical 'messengers' are altered in every system of the body.

The blood flow to your heart is constricted. Your digestion is impaired. Your breathing is restricted. Your immune system functions less well, and you become more vulnerable to infections, and perhaps malignancy. You feel bad, and your mind is less able to see its way through problems and difficulties. The list could go on. Indeed, it becomes a list of many of the diseases seen by doctors all over the world. And while unforgiveness may not be the sole cause of all of them, it increases your vulnerability to them. It can "set the scene" for them, and it can delay, or even prevent, your recovery.

Forgiveness and Relationships

The above are just some of the physical effects of unforgiveness. The effects on relationships are just as plain, if only we open our eyes. The stony silences, the sweet "Yes, dear" that means "No! I cannot stand this!", the rows, the abuse between adults, and from adults to children, the decreased productivity in the workplace, the subtle ways we sabotage ourselves and each other, the tension, or "bad vibes" in a home or workplace. Gossip, slander, revenge, crime – all are blocked love.

Forgiveness, Groups, Nations, Races and Religions

This list, too, could be extended, and represents dis-ease in the body of a nation, or indeed, of humanity itself. Every day we learn of terrible things done because there is unforgiveness between groups of various kinds.

An unforgiving person is not free. They find themselves choosing paths in life as if willed by unconscious forces, avoiding certain situations and opportunities, limiting themselves - in fact imprisoning themselves in their own negativity. They do not have peace, and need relief.

Getting in touch with and releasing your bad feelings safely can be very important. Healing them by applying the forgiveness process, so they do not recur, is even more important. And what about self forgiveness?

The effects when you are unforgiving to yourself can include depression; low self-esteem; depriving yourself of the good opportunities that life offers you; punishing yourself through activities or relationships that work harm to yourself; addictions, and so on.

If any of this is happening to you or someone you know, it has to be recognised before you can do anything about it.

What do all the above have in common? The common denominator is that there is blockage of the flow of love.

This in turn is reflected in a drop in life energy in the person or persons concerned. There is a close connection between the flow of life energy and the flow of love. Biofeedback with electrical instruments or kinesiology (by direct muscle testing) can reveal this quite simply.

An old proverb states:- “One who hates (blocks love) must dig two graves”.

Our negative, critical thoughts about ourselves and others affect us deeply. “Negative” means “subtract” does it not? When we are negative, we have subtracted from ourselves the love and life force that is potentially there for all of us to share. We delay or even completely prevent healing in body, emotion, mind and relationships. Unconditional love is one of the few things in the universe that does not get less when it is given away. Both love and joy increase when shared. But conditional love disappears when the conditions are no longer fulfilled.

What then is the forgiveness process? It is simply:- the cancellation of all the conditions in the mind that are blocking the flow of love and life energy - independently of the behaviour of others.

Most of us have not been taught specifically how to do this. The basic skills in life turn out to be more than the three “Rs” of Reading, ‘Riting, and ‘Rythmetic, - for they include Right Choice Making and Right Human Relationships. Learning the forgiveness processes comes under the last two and many of us have missed out, through no fault to anyone.

If underneath your physical condition or any bad relationships (in family or marriage, at school, or in the industrial, commercial, political, arenas) there is blocked love, then no matter how you treat the effects, the condition may fail to heal, may relapse after temporary improvement, or may become a different manifestation of the original contributing cause. The unforgiveness remains imprinted upon your nervous and other physical systems. The negativity will out somehow.

There are precise steps in the forgiveness process, each one being as important to the whole as the parts of a Swiss watch. All are needed. Because we cannot always “see” clearly for ourselves when we are in a state of unforgiveness, to help us to start, a guide who is familiar with the process may be needed. Different people may have difficulty with different

phases of it and need to be guided around any obstacles that arise. Later, the skill can become second nature, like washing dirty dishes or cleaning our teeth.

The Forgiveness-of-others process includes:

Recognising that the forgiveness process needs to be applied and to what areas.

Becoming aware that deep down you do value health, freedom from negativity, love, creativity, dignity and joy more than disease, holding on to resentment, joylessness etc., (even if you haven't always acted as if you did).

Using the will. Consciously setting the goal to comfortably, joyfully and completely apply the forgiveness process.

Honouring and validating your hurt feelings, while at the same time choosing to be no longer dominated by them.

Rigorously searching out all the negative beliefs that formed in your mind - conclusions that you came to at the time of emotional pain, but which now act against you. These include negative beliefs about yourself, the other person(s), men, women, relationships, life, sex, money etc. It can be surprising to discover how many of these there are. These will be upgraded later in the process.

Being very clear and explicit on what you would have preferred the other person to have done, instead of what you didn't want. There are specific ways this must be done, which must be learned. You also discover your deep values which were trespassed upon at the time. These were often paradoxically strengthened at the time of the hurt. They are a source of dignity and power.

Accepting that history was the way it was. No amount of wishful thinking will alter what happened - or the fact that not forgiving will continue to create more harm to yourself.

Using your will to cancel your demand that the other person should have (or should now) meet your preferences as a condition for you to practise unconditional love and goodwill towards them and yourself. It is this step which "opens up the connections" to your higher Self.

Being willing to give back responsibility (not blame) to the forgiven one for the effects of what happened or is happening. You choose to no longer take responsibility and punishment in your body for the wrong they did.

Reaching up in consciousness above the level of your everyday mind to the level of the inner reality called by so many different names - your True Self, Deep Self, Inner Spiritual Self, Soul, Higher Self, Essence, Inner Power and so on. It does not matter what you call it - it is the same inner reality. It is the source, or origin within you of health, unconditional love, higher will, wisdom, patience, compassion, fairness, understanding, dignity, deep knowing of the interrelatedness of all beings and many other higher qualities. It is from here that you draw down the living energies of love into yourself, first physically (to heal the body), then emotionally (healing each memory in turn), then mentally (changing the negative beliefs that arose at the time of the painful incidents when

the love-flow through you became damaged or blocked). Again, to begin with, a guide familiar with the process can be very helpful with this stage.

Overflowing the unconditional love to the forgiven one. This is a willed movement of the energy or qualities of love and goodwill, and is accompanied by physiological changes.

Using your will to ground and maintain the changes you have made.

Future pacing - visualising how you will think and behave in this and other relationships in the future, as you now act with goodwill, free of the old beliefs and conditioning.

Continuing to apply the process progressively in all areas of your life.

The Self-forgiveness process is slightly different, and is used to heal all the negative patterns in yourself which prevent you from loving and healing yourself or any of your parts. It is very important. So many people dislike or even hate parts of themselves, their bodies and their emotional patterns.

There are many core negative beliefs that need to be healed with this process - the beliefs that we are unworthy, sick, guilty, incompetent, unlovable, incapable, and so on. And they can be.

Muscle testing reveals if and when the process is complete, and later, if the changes are being maintained. The effects of applying the forgiveness processes can include improved relationships, physical functioning, and better response to medical or surgical treatments, and so on.

Perhaps most important of all is a subtle change in the “thought atmosphere”. Bad vibes become good vibes. Then the situation can be transformed in a way that was not previously possible. Good ideas can come, ways are found around difficulties. This happens much faster, of course, if both parties work persistently and fully at applying the processes. People become peacemakers. Relationships improve, and even the final stage of growth, dying, can become what it is meant to be, a peaceful, potentially dignified and joyous transition to a greater life.

These processes are usually first learned in a confidential group at a weekend seminar, and by using the workshop manual alone or with a supportive small action group until the skill is mastered. It can be extremely deep and moving. Considerable trust builds up between participants in such groups. In several areas, participants have formed small support groups of 3-5 who have gone on meeting weekly or fortnightly to practise and develop this skill. This has been very powerful in releasing love steadily into their daily life, promoting beneficial change and growth.

(End: 1889 words)

Notes:

Edith Stauffer's book, “Unconditional Love and Forgiveness” was published in 1987 by Triangle Press, Burbank, USA.

A Masters thesis in psychology by Barbro Holm-Ivarsson has been accepted by the University of Stockholm for four years' research upon the application of the forgiveness process. This is available from her by Email at

"Barbro Holm Ivarsson" <Barbro.Holm-Ivarsson@trosa.mail.telia.com>

The Universities of Coventry and Wisconsin have become involved in supporting the study of forgiveness.

There is an International Forgiveness Institute, PO Box 6153, Madison, WI 53716-0153, USA, which publishes a journal – "The World of Forgiveness".

"Exploring Forgiveness" with a foreword by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, ISBN 0-299-15774-1 has recently been published by the University of Wisconsin.

There is a week-long conference on Forgiveness at Findhorn, Scotland, October 16-23rd 1999.

Forgiveness is an idea whose time has come.

Dr. Guy Pettitt, of Whole Life Endeavours, Nelson, New Zealand, has been researching this material since 1980. He has taught seminars on the application of the forgiveness processes to both public and professional groups in New Zealand, Australia (including the S. Australian Department of Education), Lithuania, Russia (Mental Health Research Institute, Moscow), Sweden, Holland, Switzerland, the U.S.A. and UK. The inspiration for this work came from Dr. Edith Stauffer who brought the material to Australasia, Korea and Japan in 1980, and has also taught it in Europe and North America. There is a 150-page workshop manual and he has written "The Heart of Healing" – a desk-top publishable set of three manuals for use by people unable to attend a seminar.