

STYLUS

Scratching Beneath the Surface

stylus n. an instrument of metal, bone, or the like,
used by the ancients for writing

FORGIVENESS

How Can Forgiveness Move me Forward?

by Nina Durfee

Forgiveness of others begins with forgiveness of self.

My coach recently asked me, "What does forgiveness mean to you?" The answer flowed from my tongue just as if I knew what I was talking about. "Forgiveness is letting go of judgment, accepting, releasing in order to love. It's truly honoring all that is."

The question, of course, came in response to my own harboring of grudges and resentments and led me to ponder, "What and who do I need to forgive?"

Arrogantly, I named the person I blamed for instilling the beliefs, behaviors and habits that have kept me from being who I want to be. And then the most frightening thought occurred - who let him get away with it?

For argument's sake, let's say I'm the one who needs to be forgiven. What have I done that's so bad? The list scrolls before me like credits on a box-office hit:

Selfishness - evidenced by my closed fists.

Underlying belief: An only child is selfish and spoiled. I'd heard that mantra for so many years that I believed it must be true.

Realization: I can neither receive nor give with closed fists.

My new chosen belief: I am an only child and I am generous, caring and compassionate.

Arrogance - Display of false sense of self-trust.

Underlying belief: I'm right and you're wrong.

Realization: When I observe this quality in others, I find it pathetic. No wonder I have a hard time with self-acceptance!

My new chosen belief: We are neither right nor wrong, only different.

Impatience - Completion satisfies my sense of orderliness, but I'm miserable in the getting there.

Underlying belief: Loose ends are messy and irritating, and if I'm patient, nothing will ever get done!

Realization: Focus on the goal while neglecting the process robs me of joy in the moment.

My new chosen belief: The creativity of doing is as joyful as the sense of completion.

Deferral of gratification - Work before play.

Underlying belief: It's important to tend to others' needs before my own.

Realization: All work and no play not only makes me dull, it breeds resentment.

My new chosen belief: Honoring my authentic needs and values naturally fosters harmonious relationships with others.

Envy - I don't have the same freedom of time, space, creativity, fun, motion, spending and choice that I see others exhibit.

Underlying belief: Others are irresponsible, so I must be responsible. Someone has to stay behind and take care of the worrying!

Realization: When I say, "You go on ahead, I'll catch up," I end up meeting you there in time for the fun to be over.

My new chosen belief: I am responsible for myself. Playfulness and humor enrich my soul.

Rigidity - Imperfection is unacceptable.

Underlying belief: If you want anything done right, you've got to do it yourself.

Realization: This puts me in the same boat with Envy.

My new chosen belief: There's such a thing as "good enough."

Overcommitment - Saddling myself with commitments I don't want to keep.

Underlying belief: Once committed, it's not okay to change course.

Realization: If I trust my feelings before I commit, I can accept with joy or decline with grace and save frustration for myself and others.

My new chosen belief: It's okay to say no.

Self-doubt - Even having first-hand experience that I can survive a major leap, I worry.

Underlying belief: It's not safe to move ahead without knowing what lies in store.

Realization: You won't know what lies in store until you get there. It's always an option to change your mind.

My new chosen belief: Moving ahead is more fun than being stuck.

Pretentious - I want to please everyone, so I rationalize both sides without true consideration of my own values.

Underlying belief: Difference of opinion is uncomfortable. Can't you people just all get along?

Realization: Giving equal weight to each side of the story denies my truth.

My new chosen belief: Diversity is stimulating.

Fault-finding - Laying blame on the person who instilled these beliefs in me.

Underlying belief: My misery is someone else's fault.

Realization: The only way to forgive him is to forgive myself. Sounds simple enough. (Don't be deceived, this is the hardest thing I've ever tackled!)

My new chosen belief: I am free to choose happiness.

Tactlessness - Insensitively blurting words that offend or hurt.

Underlying belief: There's no time to waste on sugar-coating (see impatience above). I can take a joke, so should you. Get over it!

Realization: What if "get over it" is my next step?

My new chosen belief: I'm in charge of getting over it for me, not for others.

THE ROLE OF ALLOWING

Allowing takes forgiveness to the next level. Forgiveness applies to something already done. Allowing opens the door to possibility.

All these years I've taken pains to close the door, turn it off, tidy it up, leave no loose ends. The thought of allowing makes me feel light, free, almost giddy. Because it is so foreign to me, it also feels disorienting, as if I've detached from my stable root and am floating in free-fall. It is at once thrilling and disturbing, triggering many what-ifs, worries and fears.

Truly allowing requires forgiveness for past indiscretion and acknowledgment that you did the best you knew how given your awareness at the time. Now that you know better, simply don't do it again. Let go of what was so that you can enrich what is. Open the door to who you are becoming.

HOW TO FORGIVE AND ALLOW

"We forgive others when we forgive ourselves." - Eric Hoffer

1. Recognize that to forgive others, you must first forgive yourself.
2. Name the obstacle (the "sin" to be forgiven).
3. Identify the underlying belief.
4. Name the source of the belief and recognize that it was your choice to continue believing it.
5. Challenge the validity of the belief - is it really true?
6. Get over it! Put it behind you! That was then, this is NOW! Move on!
7. Articulate a positive belief that supports your forward movement.
8. When the old belief crops up, deliberately focus on the new belief.
9. Say three Hail Marys. Couldn't hurt!

Notice that when you forgive yourself, you automatically forgive the person you initially blamed. Acknowledge that person's strengths and wish him joy!

Forgiveness is good for the soul. For what will you forgive yourself today?