

## **Learning to Forgive**

In most everyone's life, there is a time when a parent, child, friend or hero disappoints us. Those we love the most can hurt us the most. As a child we learned "sticks and stones can break your bones, but words can never hurt you." Yet, when it comes to our partner or spouse, the truth is, words can hurt us deeply. Further, actions by a loved one can disappoint and hurt us. Fault-finding and being on the right-side of right really do not offer much comfort. To recover from the pain of troubled relationships, it is better to forgive.

How do you forgive someone who absolutely wronged you? Sometimes it helps to understand what forgiveness is NOT. Forgiveness is not saying the behavior that hurt you is ok. Forgiveness is not forgetting about what happened, even though it has been said that to forgive is to forget. It is not likely you will ever forget betrayal, but you can forgive.

Forgiveness is not denial of what happened. To really forgive, we must understand that forgiveness and reconciliation are different. Reconciliation is starting the relationship again with the person who wronged us. Forgiveness is a commitment we make with ourselves that what happened is now past and we choose to move forward without anger, hatred, or revenge against the person who wronged us.

Forgiveness is a learned skill. We do not usually feel like forgiving. Forgiveness requires an intentional decision. Remarkably, the person who benefits most from forgiveness is the person who forgives, as forgiveness sets us free from destructive emotions that can cause emotional stress, physical illness and interfere with memory and decision-making.

Some people find it helpful to write down an act of forgiveness. On paper write: I forgive \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the person's name) for \_\_\_\_\_ and it made me feel \_\_\_\_\_. Write as much as you need to. Take as long as you need to. Prayer and meditation can release tension and bring understanding to the process. Then, rip up or burn what was written.

Forgiveness is not easy. It is the first real step in healing a broken heart. In troubled relationships, both partners must eventually forgive themselves and each other.

To learn more healthy relationship tips and information about improving a troubled relationship, go to [www.marriagemississippi.com](http://www.marriagemississippi.com).