

e-Health: Giving the gift of forgiveness

What's a gift you can give that costs nothing and makes you feel better? Forgiveness!

Let's talk about what you can gain and lose when you forgive someone.

No one is immune to getting hurt. We might get our feelings hurt at work or home, as adults or children, as couples or as friends. We all have wounds, but when you walk around with open wounds, you're likely harboring anger, pain and resentment. These negative feelings don't hurt the person who offended you in the first place. They hurt you. Grudges and bitterness can seep into the rest of your life and spoil other relationships and experiences.

Forgiveness is about releasing those feelings of anger and bitterness. The person you forgive doesn't even need to know you forgive them for it to work for you. In fact, sometimes the person who hurt you isn't even in your life anymore or may not be alive. You can still forgive them.

By the way, forgiving isn't the same as forgetting. You can forgive someone in your heart, but you don't have to forget what happened.

Here's one way to practice forgiveness. First, stop waiting or hoping for an apology. You may never get one. Instead, write down the whole story of what happened to hurt you. Consider sharing it with a close friend or even a counselor. Your story gives voice to your feelings and acknowledges that those feelings are valid.

Next, think about times when you may have hurt someone. Consider what was happening in your life that may have led to your actions. This task isn't to rationalize what happened to you, but to understand that we all can do things that are hurtful. This helps you to develop empathy. It helps you recognize we're all human. We all make mistakes.

Forgiving gives you many gifts. It can reduce your stress, help you build healthy relationships and put you in a place of peace. It can teach you more about yourself. It can release negativity and help you enjoy everyday life more. It's an act of compassion and helps you learn to forgive yourself more.

Think of any grudges that you may be holding on to. Take a moment to practice the gift of forgiveness. Not only as a gift to others, but also to yourself. You'll be glad you did.

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44.27.385.1-RFL (12/19)