



Forgiveness – The Language of Letting Go

Michael Melles, EAP Counsellor

Recently I was sitting in my office with a client, Jim, when he suddenly said, "Mike, I can't forgive her and she *knows* it...but what she'll *never* know is how the anger and bitterness is eating away at me". I replied that forgiveness might, in fact, be one way in which Jim could discover relief from some of the problems which brought him to seek counselling in the first place. He replied that relief sounded good but that we would have to try *other* ways... that he simply *could not* forgive because:

- He believed that forgiveness was for the benefit or "sake" of the *other* person (and why do something nice for her, when *she* was the one to blame?)
- He didn't feel that he wanted to (or even that he *could*) forget the hurt which he had experienced
- He didn't believe that the act of saying a few "magic" words once (or even many times) could help bring him a sense of closure/release
- He didn't want to have to "rehash" all of the painful memories in a direct confrontation with the person who had hurt him

"Holding a grudge takes mental, emotional and physical energy." observes Barry Lubetkin, a psychologist of the Institute for Behavior Therapy in New York City. "There's a strong connection between anger and a wide spectrum of health miseries - chronic stomach upset, heart problems, and skin conditions among them."

I said, "Jim, given what you have said, I can see how you find it impossible to forgive."

So Jim had a choice – to be bitter or to move forward. After some time, Jim decided that he wanted to move forward. What I'll share in this article is a summary of several of the principles that Jim benefited from – as he strove to get away from the old motto of "forgive and forget" and move into a more effective practice of forgiveness which I call 'the language of letting go'.

- 1) **Letting go means choosing not to remember** - This forgiveness is all about making a series of *active* choices (different from "forgive and forget" because forgetting is a *passive* process that removes your choice to remember). The new language of letting go means choosing not to chew over old resentments. By choosing to replace negative thoughts and memories with more positive healthier ones, we take the opportunity to disengage from that which can make us miserable. So, do yourself a favour today - let go of the grudge, release yourself from the burden of negative thinking.
- 2) **Forgiveness is for you, not the person you forgive** –forgiving is a gift to yourself. You forgive so that you can get on with your life (just like Jim did!). You can choose to do it internally and privately, or together with the other parties involved. The point is that forgiveness is for you and therefore it doesn't *have* to directly involve the other person.
- 3) **Forgiveness takes time**- it is a process – and the deeper the wound, the longer the process will likely be. Forgiveness is also like learning a new language. It takes time, commitment and effort to become fluent and for it to feel natural. (surround yourself with people who practice forgiveness and it is like taking an immersion course).
- 4) **Forgiving others is not excusing bad behaviour or betrayal** - just because you forgive someone does not mean that what they did was okay. There is no excuse for bad behaviour.
- 5) **You may have to forgive yourself** – sometimes to let go of the past we need to forgive ourselves. Start with yourself and then work outward toward others.

If the five points above seem too theoretical, then spend some time practicing some of the following practical tips which can help us forgive*:

- **Make a list of people** you need to forgive (Do you need to include yourself?). Beside each name, write down the reasons that you need to forgive them – how forgiving them will help you. How are your hatreds hurting you?
- **List the angry thoughts** that you have the most about each person.
- **List the things that you have done** or are doing in the name of hate. Things like avoiding them, gossiping, making late night hang up calls ... and so on.
- **Promise yourself to stop the hating thoughts and actions.** Maybe you can't stop them right away, but do what you can. You might have to start with just one person on the list so that you don't feel overwhelmed.
- Make another list. **Write two or three good things about the person** ("Well, she is a good cook..."). Forgiving means letting the other person be human again, not a monster. Also, don't allow "yeah buts" to give you an excuse to follow praise with criticism.

- **Create a unique ritual.** A forgiveness ritual of your own creation may be an important step in the act of making forgiveness deep and real. Humans seem to respond at a deep level to symbols and images (like the ring at a wedding or the placing of a flower on a casket when mourning). So try harnessing the power of images and symbolism by burning that list of grudges, or taking a trip to a meaning-filled place, or by taking a cleansing bath to soak the anger out (then simply pull the plug!).
- **Don't expect or demand anything from the person that you forgive** – remember forgiveness is for you and NOT for them.

Remember...

It's easy to contact EAP!
Just call locally 549-5561 or toll free 1-888-409-4499. Also the 24/7 After Hours Emergency toll free number 1-800-668-9920 gives you direct access to a professional counsellor.

Finally, learning “the language of letting go” will likely be liberating and rewarding for those who try. However, it can also be difficult. Don't be afraid to ask for help – this may be the time to call a friend, your EAP counsellor or a clergy member.

Sources: [The Art Of Forgiving](#) by Lewis Smedes, [Peacemaking For Families](#) by Ken Sande, [Angry All The Time](#) by author Ron Potter-Efron (*note- many of the practical forgiveness tips were summarized from this helpful book by Ron Potter-Efron).



The “OLDEST TRICK IN THE BOOK” goes High Tech

Mary Huntely, Credit Counsellor

There is always someone out there looking to separate you from your hard-earned cash. With higher usage of credit cards, in person and on the web, there are some new twists. Here are some of the latest scams:

Credit Card security check – You will receive a call from someone representing themselves as being with the Security and Fraud Department of your credit card company. They will know your credit card number already which gives them an air of credibility. They will tell you they believe you have been targeted by scammers or have an unusual purchase pattern and ask you if you have made a specific purchase, like a telemarketer blocking device for \$497.99. When you say no, they will tell you they are starting a fraud investigation but need to confirm you are the actual card holder. To do this, they will ask you for the extra 3 security numbers on the back of your card.

Those 3 numbers are the PIN number they need to run a fraudulent purchase through your account.

Don't ever give this information to someone who contacts you. **Your Credit Card company already knows your PIN number and doesn't need to ask for it!** If you get a call like this, ask for a name and phone number and advise them you will call them back. Then, call the contact number you have for your Credit Card company and fill them in on the details of what has happened.

Phishing – (like “fishing for information”) This is an email that you will receive that looks just like your bank's internet homepage. They will have information fields that they are asking you to complete to update their records. You will not be able to distinguish this from your bank's website just by looking at it. The information they ask for is being used to obtain credit using your good name and credit history.

Your bank will only ever ask you to update information after YOU have accessed and logged into their website!

Spoofing – Computer hackers will access online orders and redirect them to a “crook” who will then send you an email posing as someone in the Security and Fraud division of your payment company (ie, PayPal) and advise you that unless you verify your credit card number and password within 48 hours, your account will be suspended. They can then use your credit card information for purchases, or pose as you to obtain more credit.

Do not supply credit card number or passwords to anyone who initiates contact with you by email...your payment company has this information already!

Paranoid yet? Check websites and emails for phone numbers and call them to see what kind of a response you get. Is there an address you can confirm? Does a phone call seem suspicious in any way?

Go with your gut feeling and be wary of anyone who contacts you rather than you contacting them. Hang up and call back with a phone number you locate, not one they provide. If the request from them is legitimate the phone call YOU make will have the same end result.

For more information about protecting your credit identity and credit rating, please contact FSEAP to book an appointment with a Credit Counsellor.

