

HOW TO FORGIVE

Without forgiveness relationships would not work. As Gandhi said, "In an eye for an eye world, the world would soon be blind." How does one then forgive a betrayal from a friend, a parent, a child, or from one's spouse?

A betrayal is when someone has done something you didn't expect them to do and you feel they have violated your relationship contract. At first, after a betrayal, you feel that you can't even trust your own judgment. It is important to look at what has occurred. What were your expectations? What do you think the other person's intentions were? Were there any previous discussions about what to expect from each other? For example, some people live together or get married without ever talking about their expectations about fidelity, sharing household responsibilities, etc. They simply assume the other person feels and thinks as they do.

Forgiving is letting go of your pain and anger. You have to first face it and feel it before you can let it go. Forgiving is a process, not an event. It takes time and effort.

It is important to let the other person know you have been hurt by whatever that has happened. Being willing to do an autopsy together about the hurtful event can help clarify misunderstandings and expectations. You may find out that both people erred, and that a need for compromise is required. Making some *AMENDS* along with an apology can accelerate the forgiving process. The process of making amends, clearing up misunderstandings and expectations can strengthen the bond between two people.

REMEMBER ... IF YOU ARE DEALING WITH A PERSON WHO SAYS THEY ARE SORRY FOR THEIR ACTION(S) BUT DOESN'T CHANGE THEIR BEHAVIOR(S), THEN IT WILL NOT BE SAFE TO PROCEED FURTHER WITH THEM AND INTIMACY BECOMES COMPROMISED AND LIMITED.

FORGIVING IS NOT FORGETTING.

Suzanne C. Saul, Ph.D.