

Forgiveness Meditation by Eric Kolvig

This is traditionally a preliminary practice, before doing loving kindness or compassion meditation.

Forgiveness should never be forced. Do this practice only within your comfort zone. It is fine not to do it at all.

Get into a comfortable position. Close your eyes. Bring your attention to the heart energy center in the middle of your chest, behind the breastbone or sternum. Feel whatever is there without judgment. Breathe through the heart center. Try to say the words of the forgiveness meditation through your heart.

Think of ways in which you have harmed yourself and harmed others. It is better to begin with minor things, not the big acts of harming. As far as you are able to do so, extend forgiveness to yourself for this harming by saying these phrases to yourself:

I allow myself to be imperfect.

I allow myself to make mistakes.

I allow myself to be a learner, still learning life's lessons.

I forgive myself.

If I cannot forgive myself now, may I forgive myself sometime in the future.

Think of ways in which others have harmed you — again, beginning with minor harms. As far as you are able to do so, extend forgiveness to them.

Just as I allow myself to be imperfect, so I allow you to be imperfect.

I allow you also to make mistakes.

I allow you to be learners, still learning life's lessons.

I forgive you.

If I cannot forgive you now, may I forgive you sometime in the future.

Ask forgiveness from others for the harm that you have done to them.

Please allow me to be imperfect.

Please allow me to make mistakes.

Please allow me to be a learner, still learning life's lessons.

Please forgive me.

If you cannot forgive me now, please try to forgive me sometime in the future.

Meditation on Forgiveness:

Forgiveness is one of the greatest gifts of spiritual life. It enables us to be released from the sorrows of the past. Although it can arise spontaneously, it can also be developed. ...

Before you can do forgiveness practice, you must be clear about what forgiveness means. Forgiveness does not in any way justify or condone harmful actions. While you forgive, you may also say, "Never again will I knowingly allow this to happen." You can resolve to sacrifice your own life to prevent further harm. Forgiveness does not mean you have to seek out or speak to those who have caused you harm. You may choose never to see them again.

Forgiveness is simply an act of the heart, a movement to let go of the pain, the resentment, the outrage that you have carried as a burden for so long. It is an easing of your own heart and an acknowledgment that, no matter how strongly you may condemn and have suffered from the evil deeds of another, you will not put another human being out of your heart. We have all been harmed, just as we have all at times harmed ourselves and others.

For most people, forgiveness is a process. When you have been deeply wounded, the work of forgiveness can take years. It will go through many stages - grief, rage, sorrow, fear, and confusion - and in the end, if you let yourself feel the pain you carry, it will come as a relief, as a release for your heart. You will see that forgiveness is fundamentally for your own sake, a way to carry the pain of the past no longer. The fate of the person who harmed you, whether they be alive or dead, does not matter nearly as much as what you carry in your heart. And if the forgiveness is for yourself, for your own guilt, for the harm you've done to yourself or to another, the process is the same. You will come to realize that you can carry it no longer.

To practice the formal forgiveness meditation, let yourself sit comfortably, allowing your eyes to close and your body and breath to be natural and easy. Let your body and mind relax. Breathing gently into the area of your heart, let yourself feel all the barriers and holding that you have carried because you have not forgiven, not forgiven yourself, not forgiven others. Let yourself feel the pain of keeping your heart closed. The after breathing softly into the heart for some time, begin asking and extending forgiveness, reciting the following words and allowing them to open your forgiving heart. Let the words, images, and feelings grow deeper as you repeat them.

Forgiveness from others: *There are many ways that I have hurt and harmed others, betrayed or abandoned them, caused them suffering, knowingly or unknowingly, out of my pain, fear, anger, and confusion.* Let yourself remember and visualize these many ways you have hurt others. See and feel the pain you have caused out of your own fear and confusion. Feel your own sorrow and regret, and sense that finally you can release this burden and ask for forgiveness. Picture each memory that still burdens your heart. And then one by one, repeat, *I ask for your forgiveness, I ask for your forgiveness.*

Forgiveness for yourself: Feel your own precious body and life. *There are many ways that I have betrayed, harmed, or abandoned myself through thought, word, or deed, knowingly or unknowingly.* Let yourself see the ways you have hurt or harmed yourself. Picture them, remember them, visualize them. Feel the sorrow you have carried from all these actions, and sense that you can release these burdens, extending forgiveness for them one by one. Then say to yourself, *For each of the ways I have hurt myself through action or inaction, out of my fear, pain, and confusion, I now extend a full and heartfelt forgiveness. I forgive myself, I forgive myself.*

Forgiveness for those who have hurt or harmed you: *There are many ways I have been wounded and hurt, abused and abandoned, by others in thought, word, or deed, knowingly or unknowingly.* Let yourself picture them, remember them, visualize these many ways. Feel the sorrow you have carried from this past and sense that you can release yourself from this burden by extending forgiveness if your heart is ready. Now say to yourself, *In the many ways others have hurt or harmed me, out of fear, pain, confusion, and anger, I see these now. To the extent that I am ready, I offer them forgiveness. I have carried this pain in my heart too long. For this reason, to those who have caused me harm, I offer you my forgiveness. I forgive you.*

Let yourself gently repeat these three directions for forgiveness until you can feel a release in your heart. Perhaps for some great pains you may not feel a release, but only the burden and the anguish or anger you have held. Touch this softly. Be forgiving of yourself in this as well. Forgiveness cannot be forced; it cannot be artificial. Simply continue the practice, and let the words and images work gradually in their own way. In time, you can make the forgiveness meditation a regular part of your practice, letting go of the past and opening your heart to each new moment with a wise loving-kindness.

Jack Kornfield's book "A Path With Heart", pp. 284-286

Forgiveness Chant

Represented by Rebecca Cherkoss

For any way that I have caused harm to myself
Knowingly or unknowingly
In thought, word, or action (also "In judgment, word or deed")
May I forgive myself
May I allow myself to be a student of life and to make mistakes
May I forgive myself
And if I cannot do so in the moment, may I be able to forgive myself in the future

For any way that I have caused harm to you
Knowingly or unknowingly
In thought, word, or action (also "In judgment, word or deed")
I ask for your forgiveness
May you accept me with my imperfections and mistakes
May you allow me to learn from my mistakes
May you forgive me
And if you cannot do so in the moment, may you be able to forgive me in the future

For any way that you have caused harm to me
Knowingly or unknowingly
In thought, word, or action (also "In judgment, word or deed")
May I forgive you
May I allow you, too, to be a student of life and to make mistakes
May I recognize your humanity in the midst of my pain
May my forgiveness soften any difficulties between us
May I forgive you
And if I cannot do so in the moment, may I be able to forgive you in the future