

12 Ways to **Forgive **Yourself** – No Matter WHAT You've Done!**



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1. Categorize the Offense

- Categorizing the offense begins the **Forgiveness Process**. It allows you to break down what you did, look at it, get a little distance, and begin healing.



The Four Things **Hardest** to Forgive Ourselves For:



1. You've failed at a significant life task such as finding a meaningful career or having a successful marriage.
2. You've hurt someone else because of your actions.
3. You've hurt yourself by engaging in self-destructive like alcoholism and/or addiction.
4. You didn't do something you thought was important for you to do, like maintaining a college fund your kid or having a solid retirement plan.

2. Know How You Feel



- Articulate the **specific wrong** you committed **and the harm it caused**. *Select a couple of trusted friends and tell them about what you did to get support, care, and advice.* Remember that **YOU'RE NOT ALONE** and unique in your suffering. And also remember that being honest about what you've done and what you've been through keeps you from slipping into denial, suppression, repression, and forgetfulness.

3. Understand What You Want

- You don't necessarily want to patch things up with the person you hurt, you just want to **get rid of the shame, release the blame, and find freedom from the past.** You also want to **feel the calm, peaceful, wholeness at the center of you your being.**



4. Recognize Unrealistic Expectations

- Most of us absorbed a set of unconscious rules in childhood that remain hovering in our minds whether we know it or not.
- Usually these rules are unrealistic and not actually thought about.
- Examples: Daughters have to be sweet

Men aren't supposed
to cry or show emotion

I have to be a lawyer or
a doctor in order to be
successful in life



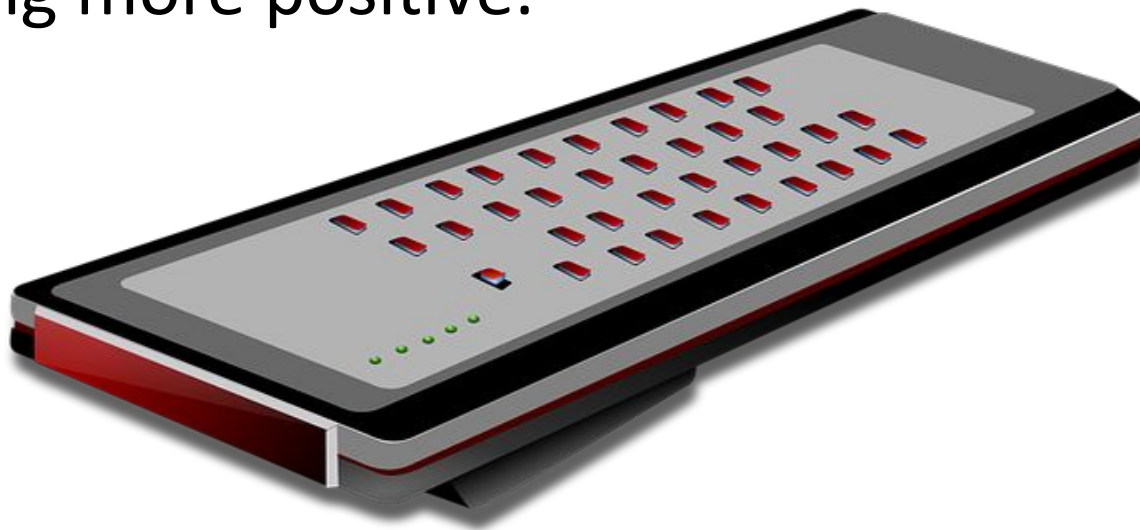
5. Identify the Hurt

- Realize that the tummy-tightening stress, injured feelings, and thoughts of guilt you feel whenever you think of what you did are what's actually making you feel bad — ***not what you actually did*** 5 minutes or 5 years ago.
- It's **your reaction** to it today that is continuing to cause you problems. It's time to kill that habit and **start your new life.**



6. Hit the **Stop Button**

- Replaying what you did *over and over again* only makes you feel bad. Quit with the Instant Replay in your head – it isn't going to help you **or** the person you hurt. All it accomplishes is making you feel WORSE. Just remember to catch yourself each time you start to ruminate on what you did wrong -- and **stop**. Then refocus your attention on something more positive.



7. Say You're Sorry



- If the reason you can't forgive yourself is because of something you've done to somebody else, sometimes all it takes is an honest apology to make everything as right as rain. Remember that the BEST (and most effective) apologies are those that are made in person. But if that's not possible, **try using a little humor**. A lady once sent her husband a copy of the game "Sorry!" with a note asking if they could play together. Not to be outdone, her partner sent back a copy of the classic Brenda Lee song, "I'm Sorry." Now THAT'S a creative apology – **and it worked!**

8. Practice PERT (Positive Emotion Refocusing Technique)

- Bring your attention fully to your stomach as you slowly draw and out two deep breaths.
- As you inhale, allow the air to gently push your belly out.
- As you exhale, consciously relax your belly so that it feel soft.
- On the third full and deep inhalation, ***bring to your mind's eye an image of someone you love or of a beautiful scene in nature that fills you with awe and wonder.***
- Often people have a stronger response when they imagine their positive feelings centered in the area around your heart.

Practicing PERT



- Often people have a stronger response when they imagine their positive feelings are centered in the area of their heart.
- While practicing, continue with soft belly breathing.
- Ask the relaxed and peaceful part of your what you can do to resolve this difficulty.
- When you bring more positive experiences into your life, your hurts will diminish in importance!

9. Make it Right



- To make amends, look for a way to **be kind to those you have hurt**.
- Even if the person isn't alive anymore or is completely absent from your life, it is still possible to ***make peace with them by providing a kindness to someone else*** (paying it forward).
- **Do good rather than feel bad.** Follow this formula and you will not only forgive yourself, but in doing so, *you will turn your life around in ways that you can't even begin to imagine.*

10. Forget the Wicked Witch Shtick

- Once you've made amends, it's time to let go of the OLD STORY in which you play the Wicked Witch of the West!
- Start telling yourself -- and everybody else -- a **NEW HEROIC** version of the **story** in which ***you do everything that you can to be a forgiving person,*** IN SPITE of your all-too-human limitations.



11. Put Things in Perspective

- *Try to think of all the kind and loving things you've done at least once a day:* from the smile you offered the angry driver next to you on the road, to the sandwich you gave that struggling homeless woman, to the stray dog you took under your wing and returned to its owner. Remind yourself of these kindly deeds and you'll begin to feel the immediate and lasting effects of growing into the new and happier you.



12. Give Yourself a Break!

- While you're learning to forgive yourself and how to **break free** from the past and move on, ***give yourself a break from all the shame and guilt by replacing those destructive emotions with gratitude***. Here's how to do it:
- Take a trip to the supermarket and give some thanks for the abundance of food that we have available.
- Visit a nursing home or hospital and experience the fresh and immediate sense of gratitude you feel for your own good health.
- Next time when you're on the road, mentally thank each of the **GOOD** drivers who follow the rules of the road.
- Thank your significant other for caring for you every day.
- ***Every morning when you wake up, give thanks for your breath and the gift of your life!***

