

The Power of Forgiveness

Forgiving someone who has hurt you deeply — a parent, sibling, spouse, ex-spouse, employer, or even a stranger — is one of the most difficult challenges you'll face in life.



Until you can forgive, anger, resentment, and bitterness will continue to eat away at your heart and mind, causing emotional and even physical damage because of increased stress.

"Not forgiving means you carry in your heart the pain the person has caused you," says Kathleen Griffin, author of *The Forgiveness Formula: How to Let Go of Your Pain and Move on With Life*. "Not letting go of this burden can keep you trapped in the past and unable to move forward into a better future."

People who have been deeply hurt often say there's a "before" and "after" the hurt occurred. They remember the time before the hurt as one without problems, and withholding forgiveness becomes a way of trying to go back to how things used to be.

"But to begin the journey of forgiveness, you need to give up hope of things being as they were before the hurt occurred," says Ms. Griffin. "Your life is different, and accepting that what happened to you really did occur, but that you

can forgive and let go of the pain it caused, is the first step."

Lighten your load

Choosing to forgive — and it is a choice — can make a significant difference in your peace of mind and future happiness.

"Think of people you know who can forgive," says Ms. Griffin. "Now think of those who bear a grudge. Which camp would you rather be in?"

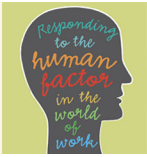
Continued on next page

IN THIS ISSUE

The Power of Forgiveness	1-2
Become a Communication Pro	3
Preventing Identity Theft	4

Claremont EAP distributes this newsletter to provide employees with general behavioral health information. If you have concerns about these or other behavioral health issues, you can call Claremont to arrange for assistance. You will be directed to an appropriate, experienced professional who can offer guidance in a variety of work and family matters.

For confidential help, call: **800-834-3773**
or visit claremonteap.com



To imagine the difference forgiveness could make in your life, think about a time when you took a trip and packed too much. Remember how grateful you were to put down your bags and not have to carry them anymore?



"Your forgiveness issues are just the same," says Ms. Griffin. "You may not be conscious of carrying them every day, but they weigh you down just the same. Imagine letting go of the burden of your resentment and anger, and think about how much easier your life journey would be."

Practice forgiveness

Make two lists: an "easy" list of people who have not done you a great wrong but with whom you still have issues, and a "hard" list of those who

have hurt you deeply. Begin by working to forgive the people on the easy list first.

"Forgiveness doesn't mean forgetting what was done to you, but it does mean completely letting go of the hurt someone has caused you, because you have decided to do so," says Ms. Griffin. "Forgiveness is never about the

other person. It's all about you and your decision to live a less painful and more liberated life."

Writing in a forgiveness journal can help. In the journal, note how you feel about forgiveness and where you are in the process.

"As the years pass, you may have people who seem beyond your power to forgive," says Ms. Griffin. "But you always have a choice: Do I choose to hold on to bitterness or to forgive? To forgive is to say, 'It stops here. With me.'"

Krames Staywell

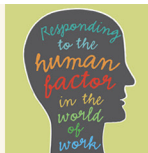
Other ideas

- Meditate to help center and calm your spirit. Sit quietly with your eyes closed and become conscious of your breathing.
- Take "life breaths" to help you cope with negative emotions. Choose a word that describes your feelings, such as anger, fear, or hate. As you take a deep, slow breath in through your nose, imagine you're breathing in the opposite words: hope, love, or peace. Now slowly and deeply breathe out through your mouth, breathing out the fear, anger, and hate.
- Visualize a forgiveness room. Imagine a room deep within your heart. The room contains all the bitterness and sadness of not forgiving. Open that room, clean it, and little by little, make it a part of yourself again so that no part of your heart is shut down.

Claremont EAP
can help address all of these
issues!

Call: **800-834-3773**

or visit claremonteap.com



**Become a
Communication
pro**

**In the office setting,
you can be a more effective communicator
with fellow employees by:**

- Showing people they can trust you by not embarrassing anyone.
- Avoiding judgment and sticking to the facts.
- Giving praise and feedback regularly.
- Asking for clarity when you're confused: "I want to make sure I've understood you correctly. Do you have an example of what you're speaking about?"
- Restating the person's point to check for understanding: "What I've heard you say is that you're..."
- Use body language to show you're listening (eye contact, nodding your head, etc.).

Ask for Responses

It's important to leave time and space available so that you can allow others to share. By asking for others' opinions and thoughts, you'll show that you care about their feelings. As a result, colleagues and others may come to you more often about concerns or ideas. Ask the following questions to show your interest:

- "What do you think about that?"
- "Was that easy to understand?"
- "Do you feel ok about this?"

Communication Basics

Whether you're communicating one-on-one or within a group,

- Try not to make assumptions around what the other person already knows. Make sure the person knows all the information and has a basic understanding of what you are speaking of.
- Use appropriate language when speaking to another person. The person you are speaking to will have a unique background, skill set, age, and level of experience. Try to make it so he or she can best understand you by using clear, direct language that takes these characteristics into consideration.
- Pick a quiet and appropriate place to converse. If the conversation is about a personal matter, make sure the place is private.

Consider Non-Verbal Cues

When you're speaking to someone, it's not just your words that they are observing. Think about the messages you are sending through tone of voice and body language:

1. Tone of voice:

- Does your voice sound urgent or hesitant?
- Do you sound nervous or are you stammering?
- Do you sound light-hearted or belligerent?

2. Body language:

- Are you making eye contact?
- Are your arms folded?
- Are you leaning forward aggressively or looking relaxed?
- Are you fidgeting or obviously distracted?

If your body language and tone of voice send a different message than your words, try to find out why. Are you really saying what you mean?

Active Listening

- Respond to the person who is talking by giving active feedback like, "Uh-huh," or "Please, go on."
- A small nod of your head while a person is talking also reaffirms that you are listening.

Practice the tips above to help develop your listening and speaking skills. Communication skills take time and practice, but the more you work at it, the more effective you'll be.

Written by Life Advantages - Author Delvina Miremadi ©2013

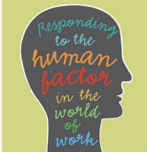
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Being a good communicator doesn't just involve good speaking skills; it's about being a good listener, too. In order to communicate better in all areas of your life, use the following tips to help you develop your abilities and connect with others more effectively.



Preventing Identity Theft



Identity theft is an increasingly popular crime — there's a new victim almost every minute. Thieves steal critical information about their victims: names, addresses, telephone numbers, bank account or credit card numbers, and — most dangerous of all — Social Security numbers. They put this sensitive information to work in many ways: applying for additional credit cards or auto loans, opening bank accounts, setting up telephone services, and going on shopping sprees. Some identity thieves even go so far as to file bankruptcy in a victim's name or give the victim's name to police during an arrest.

If your identity is stolen, you could spend months or even years cleaning up the mess. You may be denied credit and refused loans, lose job opportunities, or even be suspected of crimes you didn't commit. Fortunately, there are ways to minimize the risk of falling prey to an identity thief. Here are some simple things to do:

Secure your personal records

Ensure that your personal information is safely secured, especially if you have roommates or employ outside help.

- At work, verify that your personnel records are maintained securely and that sensitive records are shredded during disposal.
- Deposit outgoing mail at the post office or in a post office collection box (not in an unsecured bin or mailbox), and collect your incoming mail promptly.
- Protect your trash by tearing up or shredding sensitive materials: credit applications or credit offers, insurance forms, medical statements, charge receipts, checks and bank statements, and canceled or expired credit and ATM cards.

Watch your wallet

Keep your wallet (and your purse) in a safe place at work. When you are out in public, carry your wallet on your person at all times. In a restaurant, do not hang your purse on the back of your chair; this is easy-pickings for an identity thief.

Limit your load

Carry only the personal identification, credit cards, and debit cards that you need. Store little-used identification and cards in a secure location.

Protect your Social Security number (SSN)

Keep your Social Security card in a secure location, and give out your SSN only when absolutely required. If your state uses Social Security numbers as your driver's license number, request that it substitute another number.

Use passwords

Place passwords on your credit cards, bank, and telephone accounts. Use passwords that are not easily guessed or found. Avoid using your mother's maiden name, the last four digits of your SSN, or other personal data as your password.

Guard against tele-theft

Any time you are asked to provide personal information by telephone, through the mail, or over the Internet, be wary. Even when you have initiated the contact, confirm that the other party is legitimate. Call the organization's customer service number and validate the exchange — before you provide any personal information. Also, ask how the information will be shared with others; request that the information be kept confidential.

Protect your PC.

Take several steps to protect your identity as stored on your PC:

- Use a firewall and secure browser.
- Don't download files from strangers.
- Maintain current virus protection.
- Password-protect any personal or financial information.
- Avoid automatic log-in processes (which store your account name and password).
- When you dispose of your computer, delete personal information and completely overwrite the hard drive.

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