

Forgiveness Questions:

- Could you describe a life situation or relationship that needed forgiveness on your part?

I can. The life situation that stands out most in my mind is an intermingled love affair among my parents and my aunt. The short story is simple. My mom and dad divorced, and my dad is now dating and living with my aunt, who is my mom's sister.

- What made you decide to forgive?

For me, perhaps forgiveness was a selfish choice. The people involved in this situation are the people who have always meant the most to me and been the closest to me in my life. I had to choose to forgive them in order to keep them in my life, to be able to be with them without hating them.

- What was your inspiration or motivation to forgive?

I was raised to forgive. In my heart, it is right to forgive.

- How did the skills you learned as a Life Coach help you?

As a life coach, I know that in order to maintain a change, a state of mind, or a way of being, continued practice is often required. As this situation is one that is ongoing, I must actively forgive every day.

Being a life coach requires me to take an unbiased approach, one that provides space for people that is free from judgment. Although this is something that is more innate in some than others, it is also something that can be learned. Learning to take a "what is" approach instead of deeming "right or wrong" can also be helpful in continuing to forgive. It relieves me from reactions based on judgments and instead allows me to live according to acceptance and free will.

- Are there any specific types of tools or practices that helped you forgive?

I am fascinated by phenomenology. I believe that the ability to take multiple perspectives can empower people. Taking multiple perspectives can help people open their minds and take on different points of view. Sometimes, "walking around the lantern" and seeing the shadows from the other side, can help us have a better understanding. The more we understand, the easier it can be for us to forgive. Although, I don't believe that having an understanding of another party's actions is required in order to be able to forgive.

I also believe that we can never truly know or understand another's experience of reality, and therefore we must remember that our judgments and assumptions may not be relevant.

There are some basic Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) principles that I follow that aid in forgiveness:

*Every behavior has a positive intention.

If I search for it, then I must know that the actions of my father and my aunt were not meant to hurt me, my mother, or anyone else in my family. They were likely the actions of searching for love, fulfillment, and meaning in their lives.

*Choice is better than no choice.

I have a choice to forgive.

*Living is learning. We cannot not learn.

I ask myself what I can take from this situation that I can learn from. I may have learned how I don't want to be, I may have learned a deeper level of forgiveness, and I may have learned lessons about life. With these, forgiveness comes easier with acceptance. It is also easier to forgive if I take the perspective of how it has helped in my life.

(I also went through rigorous anger management training and in doing so was better able to understand myself, which lessened the importance of holding on to my anger towards my family and allowed me to forgive.)

· What important advice or tips would you give to someone in regards to the power of forgiveness?

It is often felt or perceived that forgiving someone can somehow "let them off the hook" or excuse whatever it is that they have done. It is as if you are doing them a favor by forgiving them. I would invite people to explore the favor that they would actually be doing for themselves in choosing to forgive. Choosing to forgive returns you to your personal power. It brings you to the present (here and now). It eliminates distractions and allows you to have control over your own energy (mental, emotional, spiritual & physical). Forgiveness is for you. It is a tool that is about helping *you*.