

How to do ... forgiveness

Hypnotherapist and counsellor Fiona Hoban says forgiveness is a personal choice. Here, she takes us through the four stages.



WHAT HAS FORGIVENESS got to do with our wellbeing and mental health? We often view forgiveness as some kind of religious or moral ideal, but research shows that the more forgiving a person is, the less anxiety, depression and anger he/she has and the greater his/her positive wellbeing.

Richard Fitzgibbons of The International Forgiveness Institute in Wisconsin, America says: "The research on forgiveness ... may be as important to the treatment of emotional and mental disorders as the discovery of sulfa drugs and penicillin were to the treatment of infectious diseases."

WHAT IT IS ...

Forgiveness is described as a merciful restraint from pursuing resentment or revenge when the wrongdoer's actions deserve it, and giving the gifts of mercy, generosity and love when the wrongdoer does not deserve them.

WHAT IT IS NOT ...

To forgive does not mean to forget or deny, to condone or to excuse. Importantly, forgiveness is not dependent on condition of compensation, ie, "I'll forgive if they apologise." (This is interesting in light of the divisive views expressed about Queen Elizabeth's recent visit). Forgiveness is a personal choice, it takes time, and the process has nothing to do with the person who caused the offence.

CASE STUDY

Mary and Anne are good friends. However, Mary finds out that Anne has been less than discreet about Mary's personal affairs. Understandably, Mary is hurt and angry about this.

Marianne Williamson from *A Course in Miracles*

What could you want that forgiveness cannot give? Do you want peace? Forgiveness offers it.

Do you want happiness, a quiet mind, a certainty of purpose, and a sense of worth and beauty that transcends the world?

Do you want care and safety, and the warmth of sure protection always? Do you want a quietness that cannot be disturbed, a gentleness that never can be hurt, a deep, abiding comfort, and a rest so perfect it can never be upset?

All this forgiveness offers you, and more.

Realising that you are the hurt and angry is important because it is actually the first phase on the road to forgiveness and that's the **uncovering phase**.

Following on from this, Mary may realise that the more she focuses on what has happened, the more she goes over and over it again in her head, the more upset she becomes. This doesn't solve anything. The only person getting hurt here is Mary. When she begins to realise this, she has reached the second phase of forgiveness – **the decision phase**.

An important first move in this stage is to drop any idea of revenge towards Anne. There's no point thinking that two can play at this game – two wrongs never make a right.

To get to the end of this phase, Mary must accept that she has to let go of the hurt. This is not an easy ask and it often takes time for people to reach this point. Unfortunately, many

Holding on to hurt affects our feelings, our thoughts and our behaviour. See how many of the following you tick. What is this doing to your wellbeing?

Feelings: I feel ... towards him/her	Thoughts: I think he/she is ...	Behaviour Regarding this person, I ...
<input type="checkbox"/> hostile	<input type="checkbox"/> evil	<input type="checkbox"/> avoid
<input type="checkbox"/> unloving	<input type="checkbox"/> horrible	<input type="checkbox"/> ignore
<input type="checkbox"/> repulsed	<input type="checkbox"/> dreadful	<input type="checkbox"/> neglect
<input type="checkbox"/> resentment	<input type="checkbox"/> immoral	<input type="checkbox"/> speak ill of
<input type="checkbox"/> angry	<input type="checkbox"/> corrupt	<input type="checkbox"/> act negatively toward
<input type="checkbox"/> cold	<input type="checkbox"/> worthless	<input type="checkbox"/> do not speak to
<input type="checkbox"/> dislike	<input type="checkbox"/> damned	<input type="checkbox"/> isolate
<input type="checkbox"/> bitter	<input type="checkbox"/> selfish	<input type="checkbox"/> make life difficult for him/her
<input type="checkbox"/> disgust	<input type="checkbox"/> sadistic	<input type="checkbox"/> am nasty towards
<input type="checkbox"/> vengeful	<input type="checkbox"/> unloving	<input type="checkbox"/> disrespect



people go to their graves unable to do this.

When Mary feels ready to let go of the past, to forgive, there are a number of ways she can do this. She could put the event that upset her so much in context with the years of friendship she and Anne have shared. Is it worth losing all of that for the sake of one mistake?

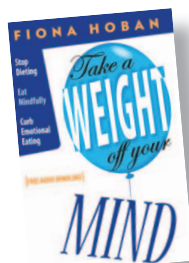
She could try and empathise with Ann's actions – after all, none of us are perfect. Or she could simply find the compassion in her own heart to forgive her friend Anne. This deliberate working through of the pain is known as the **work phase of forgiveness**.

In the final phase of forgiveness, Mary starts to feel the effect of this change of heart and begins to feel emotional relief.

This final phase, or **outcome phase**, is when Mary discovers the paradox of forgiveness: as she forgives her friend, it is Mary herself who gains most. She gains a sense of freedom and compassion for herself as well as for others and real peace of mind.

ASK YOURSELF

- Who do I need to forgive?
- What do I get out of withholding forgiveness?
- What would it take to begin the journey?
- What would life be like if I let go?
- If I don't let go, what will life be like in 10 years' time?
- Do I want to pass this hurt on to my children and/or other family members? ★



Fiona Hoban runs a private practice in Westport and lectures part-time in counselling and psychotherapy with the National Counselling Institute of Ireland (NCII). To find out more about Fiona and her book *Take A Weight Off Your Mind* (right), visit www.fiona.hoban.ie.



ORSMOND CLINICS
weight loss success



For more information Call
Dublin 01 2827500 or
Email info@orsmondclinics.com
Check out our new website at
www.orsmondclinics.com

**Initial Consultation
from €45**



Michelle, a hairdresser, has been a client at Orsmond Clinics for the last 6 months and feels it has completely transformed her life. "In work one day I looked down at my legs and feet and they were so swollen..... it was time for me to take action. I have lost 5 stone and am still continuing to lose weight.....hearing the compliments from others really makes the whole process a reality for me."

To Read Michelles' story click on our new website
www.orsmondclinics.com

Why not book a consultation with one of our Fully Qualified Dieticians or Nutritionists

All Initial Programmes include a comprehensive set of Blood Tests.

**Orsmond Clinics are located at
Baggot St & Loughlinstown Dublin,
Oranmore Galway,
Newbridge Kildare & Portlaoise.**

Limerick Clinic Opening June 23rd