

WHAT IS FORGIVENESS?

HOW DOES THE BITTERNESS BEGIN?

1. You took something too personally
 - A. You took something personally that you did not want to happen or something did not occur that you were expecting. You did not take constructive action thus missing an opportunity to transform your hurt feelings into an experience that helps you grow and got angry because you didn't know what else to do
 - B. Each offense carries both *personal* and *impersonal* within it. Being hurt is common. Find the "impersonal" in the hurt. Nothing that has happened to you is unique. You are not the first or the last to be hurt the way you were. Most offenses are committed without the intention of hurting anyone personally. What has happened is not a unique catastrophe but the beginning of a new story of forgiveness and healing.
2. You continued to blame the person who hurt you for how badly you felt.
 - A. When you believe someone else is the cause of your pain, then you need something from that other person in order to feel better. When it doesn't come, your feelings may go to helplessness, resentment, rejection, abandonment, wanting revenge and wanting the other person to suffer..
 - B. Fight or Flight stress chemicals are released when you think about someone who has hurt you deeply. You look at two choices - fighting back or getting away. These choices are inadequate for regaining control of your emotional life. Your nervous system cannot tell whether the danger you are seeing is occurring now or ten years ago. It alters your ability to think as the blood flows toward the more primitive parts of the brain and "survival becomes most important causing the body to 'stand guard.'" You must step away from "blaming others" for how bad you feel or how poorly your life is unfolding by learning to distinguish the real from "imagined" danger. to function effectively
 - C. Giving away your power is the result of blaming your distress on the person who hurt you. You *knight* them to eternally regulate your emotions. When you feel bad every time you think of that person, a habit begins that leads to feeling helpless and you become a victim of someone, who is not going to change, who does not have your best interest in mind so they become more powerful in your mind. There is wasted suffering from staying tied to people who did not care for you. Forgiveness helps you reclaim your power.
3. You created a bitter grievance story.
 - A. You craft a story by placing what happened in sequence and to describe your feelings. It offers commentary on the events and provides interpretation of people's actions. You can say what the story means to you. You decided which events to highlight, minimize or dismiss. Too often you can lock in the negative way a hurtful situation has affected you. You can paint the picture of helplessness in the face of someone's cruelty and a grievance story has been created. We SUFFER when we tell the story repeatedly to others or ourselves and familiar stress chemicals race through our body.

B. Grievance story test

1. Have you told your story more than twice to the same person?
2. Do you replay the events that happened more than two times in a day in your mind?
3. Do you find yourself speaking to the person who hurt you even when that person is not there?
4. Have you made a commitment to yourself to tell the story without upset and then found yourself unexpectedly agitated?
5. Is the person who hurt you the central character of your story?
6. When you tell this story, does it remind you of other painful things that have happened to you?
7. Does your story focus primarily on your pain and what you have lost?
8. In your story is there a villain?
9. Have you made a commitment to yourself to not tell your story again and then broken your vow?
10. Do you look for other people with similar problems to tell your story to?
11. Has your story stayed the same over time?
12. Have you checked the details of your story for accuracy?

If you answer "yes" to five or more of the first 11 questions and/or "no" to question 12, there is a good chance you have a grievance story.

The grievance story happens because of UNENFORCEABLE rules you have and you are trying to write out speeding tickets that can't be delivered so they clutter up your mind. When you try to enforce something over which you have no control, you create a problem for yourself.

Unenforceable rule: an expectation you have that you don't have the power to make happen.

The more unenforceable rules you have, it is likely that you will feel agitated and disappointed.

The stronger you try to enforce something you can't control the worse you will feel.

Unenforceable rules are everywhere and are at the root of almost all our suffering and can warp our judgment. The grievance process begins when we want something and make an unenforceable rule about getting it. In almost every circumstance in which you feel significant emotional pain, you are trying to enforce an unenforceable rule.

THE GRIEVANCE STORY

- is your enemy
- is physically hurtful
- has imprisoned you
- keeps you in the past
- alienates your friends and family
- reminds you and others that you are a "victim"

We can either forgive and move on or be tied to things over which we have no control.

CHANGE THE GRIEVANCE STORY, CHANGE YOUR RULES, RECLAIM YOUR POWER AND YOU BEGIN TO HEAL. YOU CAN LEARN TO FORGIVE