



GROW IN FORGIVENESS

8 ways to cultivate a forgiving mindset

BY SR. PATRICIA M. MCCORMACK, IHM

1. When you are in a good mood and rested, you react differently to situations than you do when you are tired and irritable. Therefore, establish **good sleep routines and nutrition habits**.

2. We each have tender **pressure points** that make us more sensitive to feel hurt in situations that might not offend other people: for example, a tendency to feel ignored, exploited, unappreciated, or superior. Grow to know yourself and use self-talk when tempted by feelings of hurt or anger.

3. Use **"I" messages** to communicate in a respectfully assertive way.

- When ... (state the behavior)
- I feel ... (state the feeling)
- Because ... (state the consequence)
- Request (state your need)

Example: "When trash is left on the lunch table, I *feel* taken for granted because I am left to clean up the mess that others make. Please show respect for me by clearing your meal space before leaving the table."

Forgiveness is, first, a gift that we give to ourselves.

4. Other people are not mind readers! Use **"I" statements** to express your needs, feelings, wants, and desires. Example: "I need you to turn the stereo volume down" or "I feel invisible" or "I want to complete my thought before hearing a response."

5. Take **ownership** (accept responsibility) for what you contributed to the situation.

6. Whenever anger or hurt surfaces, pray a **short prayer** (aspiration) such as: "My Jesus, mercy" or "Mother of Good Counsel, guide and protect me" or "Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place my trust in you" or "Father, forgive them. They don't know what they are doing."

7. Reverse roles. Put yourself in the offender's shoes. What is the reason behind the person's behavior (*attention, power/control, revenge, or inadequacy*)? Rather than

take it personally, realize that the behavior results from the offender's personal struggle.

8. Ground yourself. Carry a small medal, rosary, or wooden cross in your pocket. When hurt or anger press on your heart, touch the object and recall that God is with you. **T**

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TEACH FORGIVENESS

7 truths that foster an attitude of forgiveness

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JESUS SAID THAT IF A BROTHER SINS AGAINST YOU seven times a day and each time says, “I am sorry,” you are to forgive him (see Luke 17:3-4). Jesus was speaking to adults, but the advice applies equally well to children. Forgiveness is an ideal that Christian parents try to instill in their families. Use these seven truths to cultivate forgiveness within your family.

- 1.** Hurts come from various sources. We easily feel left out, betrayed, cheated, overlooked, wrongly accused, ignored, put down, embarrassed, ridiculed, disrespected, used, or bullied.
- 2.** Egos are fragile; slights fuel anger, defensiveness, standoffs, shut-downs, shutouts, and retaliation.
- 3.** Forgiveness requires “forgetfulness,” a willingness to let go of the hurt and start anew. Releasing the hurt from memories is the essence of forgiveness and necessary for personal peace.
- 4.** Forgiveness is, first, a gift that we give to ourselves. It is also a gift that we offer to the offender — who may or may not accept it. Offering forgiveness releases us from the paralyzing effects of an unforgiving spirit.
- 5.** When we hold on to a hurt, we let that event or person continue to hurt us. An unforgiving spirit makes our own hearts hard and spreads into a general distrust of others. When we hold on to anger or hurt, we stop smiling and laughing. We cease to see the world around us with optimism. We isolate ourselves. We cannot recognize blessings because we exist within an inner world of “I’ll show you” or “I’ll get even with you” or “I’ll punish you; I’ll make you pay!” or “You’ll be sorry!”
- 6.** An unforgiving spirit continues to hurt us. We become bitter, and meaningful life stops for us. Meanwhile, the offending person may be totally unaware of hurting us — or worse, he or she may be totally unconcerned about causing hurt. That person continues to be just fine while we are destroying ourselves — emotionally, psychologically, and even physically. Anger affects health.
- 7.** Forgiveness is a proactive choice. It is a freedom we give to ourselves to continue to live and love. As a result, we continue to grow happy, healthy, and more whole. We admit that someone has offended us. We do not condone the wrong. But rather than keeping the hurt alive by ruminating over it, we make a decision to grow beyond the offense and release the negative emotions associated with the person or event. **T**

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