

Forgiving is not. . .

Condoning or Excusing

When we forgive, we do **not** simply put up with the person's hurtful behavior, blame ourselves for the person's behavior, pretend that we weren't hurt, or say the person didn't mean to hurt us. Instead, we acknowledge that we are all imperfect humans.

Forgetting the Hurt

When we forgive, we remember the hurt in a different way, with new eyes. This means that we do not pretend the hurt never happened. We acknowledge that the unfairness was, is, and will always be wrong. This remembering of the injustice in a different way can protect us from similar future hurts by steering us away from situations or people who may treat us unfairly and can set us free from an abiding anger and resentment.

Simply calming down or becoming indifferent

Anger may diminish over time and the unfair hurt may become less painful. This calming down can certainly benefit a person, but it does not necessarily mean that he or she has forgiven. Forgiveness involves: the recognition and acknowledgement that an injustice occurred; a struggle to see the offender's worth; and the gifts of benevolence and compassion.

Reconciliation

Reconciliation is the act of two people, separated by conflict, coming together in agreement to establish or re-establish a relationship. Forgiveness is a moral decision to see the other person's worth, let go of anger, and offer compassion, benevolence, and love toward the offender. Forgiveness without reconciliation is possible. True reconciliation without forgiveness is not possible.

For a detailed explanation of what forgiveness is and is not, refer to Dr. Enright's best-selling book *Forgiveness is a Choice: A Step-by-Step process for Resolving Anger and Restoring Hope* (www.amazon.com). This self-help book is for people who have been deeply hurt by another and who are caught in a vortex of anger, depression, and resentment. It walks readers through the forgiveness process Dr. Enright developed to reduce anxiety and depression while increasing self-esteem and hopefulness.