

Forgiveness Defined

While there are many adequate definitions of forgiveness, this is the one developed by Dr. Robert Enright, the founder of the International Forgiveness Institute who has studied forgiveness for more than 25 years:

When unjustly hurt by another, we forgive when we overcome the resentment toward the offender, not by denying our right to the resentment, but instead by trying to offer the wrongdoer compassion, benevolence, and love; as we give these, we as forgivers realize that the offender does not necessarily have a right to such gifts.

Based on the ideas of philosopher Joanna North, this definition makes it clear that:

- ▶ Forgiving begins with pain and that we have a right to our feelings.
- ▶ We are acknowledging that the offense was unfair and will always continue to be unfair.
- ▶ We have a moral right to anger; it is fair to cling to our view that people do not have a right to hurt us. We have a right to respect.
- ▶ Forgiveness requires giving up something to which we have a right—namely our anger or resentment.

Forgiving is an act of mercy toward an offender, someone who does not necessarily deserve our mercy. It is a gift to our offender for the purpose of changing the relationship between ourselves and those who have hurt us.

To forgive a person who caused us an unfair hurt is:

- ◆ **to see his or her inherent worth** (a deep worth that is not dependent on such things as possessions, ability, behavior, appearance, group membership, and so forth);
- ◆ **to extend loving thoughts, feelings, and actions toward him or her;** and,
- ◆ **to respond to that person with the gifts of kindness, respect, and generosity.**

Forgiveness is offering love to a person in the face of injustice and at a time when that person is most unlovable.

This definition of forgiveness is detailed in Dr. Enright's best-selling book *Forgiveness is a Choice: A Step-by-Step Process for Resolving Anger and Restoring Hope* (available in the Store). 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.

Filename: Forgiveness Defined
Directory: C:\Documents and Settings\Administrator\Desktop
Template: C:\Documents and Settings\Administrator\Application
Data\Microsoft\Templates\Normal.dot
Title: Forgiveness Defined
Subject:
Author: Preferred Customer
Keywords:
Comments:
Creation Date: 6/16/2012 2:31 AM
Change Number: 2
Last Saved On: 6/16/2012 2:31 AM
Last Saved By: Preferred Customer
Total Editing Time: 6 Minutes
Last Printed On: 6/16/2012 2:42 AM
As of Last Complete Printing
Number of Pages: 1
Number of Words: 358 (approx.)
Number of Characters: 2,041 (approx.)