

Audio Track 23: Forgiving Others

[00:00:00]

Try this: Forgiving others.

Begin by finding a comfortable position and settling in whichever way feels right to you. You might choose to follow your breath for a bit, or to feel the sensations where your body makes contact with whatever is holding you up. Perhaps you'd like to open to sounds in the room. Please choose whatever practice helps you center yourself and open to the present moment. When you feel ready, calling to mind something small to medium that your partner has done that hurt you. Please don't make this something traumatic. Let's stay on the easier side of the spectrum here. This could also mean working with someone else who has hurt you and working with a specific event. And please be sure to choose something that you would like to forgive, if possible.

And then contacting the pain that this person has caused you, perhaps feeling it in your body as a residual stress. If it feels right, offering yourself a kind and supportive touch, perhaps by placing your hand on the part of the body that's holding the stress and allowing kindness to flow from your hand to your body. Feel the support of the touch. In beginning to offer yourself compassion for how you've suffered, perhaps saying, "May I be safe." "May I be peaceful." "May I be kind to myself." "May I accept myself as I am." Or using your own phrases. If it feels like you need to stay here, keep giving yourself compassion for as long as you need.

And if it still feels right, begin to forgive by considering the burden to you, as you carry the hurt and resentment of the injury. If it's helpful and you feel ready to let go of that burden, perhaps say something to yourself like, "I've carried this pain long enough and I'm ready to set it down now." See if you can see the other person more clearly and understand the forces that led this person to act in a way that hurt you badly. Recognize it's human to make mistakes. Considering what were the current conditions in this person's life? For example, were he, she, they under a lot of stress at the time? And considering the factors that may have shaped this person's personality, for example, did this person have a difficult childhood? And also considering any cultural or societal factors that shaped this person, like being marginalized or oppressed.

If your heart begins to soften with the understanding that we all make mistakes when our suffering exceeds our resources, know that the other person's mistake, while not acceptable, was a human mistake. If it feels right, begin to offer forgiveness to the other person, perhaps saying the phrase, "May I begin to forgive you for what you have done that has caused me harm." Or it might feel better to say, "May I begin to open to the possibility of forgiving you for what you have done that has caused me harm." Or you could say, "I offer you forgiveness to the extent that I am ready." See what feels right for you. You can stay with this as long as you like.

When you feel ready, take a few moments to rest here by going back to following the breath, feeling yourself grounded and safely held by the chair or cushion you're sitting on, or offering yourself your own kind touch or words. Know that you can and will tend to your own safety as best you can moving forward. And consider what that means for you in this relationship right now.

You may want to take a moment and pause here to take any notes that would be helpful.

Remember that this is a process, and don't worry about the outcome. When we practice forgiveness, we're training the heart to put down the burden we're carrying. If you did feel unburdened by this practice, please make a note of how releasing the resentment you're carrying has freed you in some way.

And as always, remember to thank yourself for showing up, with curiosity, with wisdom, with kindness.

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