



## Forgiveness and How to do it

One key ingredient to happiness is unconditional forgiveness. It is critical in the practice of nonviolence and transforming our thoughts, speech, and actions to equanimity and harmony.

It is as important to ask for forgiveness as it is to forgive others. Asking for forgiveness is so essential that it is the central aspect of the Jain ritual Pratikraman. In Pratikraman, we ask for forgiveness from all levels and from of living beings. By asking for forgiveness, we lessen the attachment to that event or incident

and avoid such actions in the future. By asking forgiveness, we learn and better ourselves.

### **Benefits of Forgiveness:**

- It reduces anger, depression and stress.
- One becomes more hopeful, peaceful, compassionate, and confident.
- Our relationships grow stronger.

### **What is Your Level of Forgiveness?**

	Levels of Forgiveness	What is your level?
Level 1	Ignorance	Think cruel thoughts toward people, objects, and situations.
Level 2	Grudge	Express ill thoughts and keep grudge for years.
Level 3	Forgive	Mentally forgive a person you despised or had fight or disagreement with. Ask for forgiveness.
Level 4	Proactive	Ask for forgiveness from a person you despise or had strong disagreement.
Level 5	Universal	Forgive people and ask for forgiveness from all living beings every moment.

## Stages of Forgiveness

	Stage I – Preventive Forgiveness	Stage II – Passive Forgiveness	Stage III – Active Forgiveness
Description	Preventive forgiveness is based on the idea that if one doesn't feel animosity toward someone, he or she will not need to forgive.	Passive forgiveness stresses indifference. The other person is neither a friend nor an enemy.	Active forgiveness involves completely forgiving someone regardless of what they have done.
Example	You resolve disagreements immediately, clarify misunderstandings early on, abstain from having unrealistic expectations of others, and you do not get jealous.	Assume someone has hurt your feelings in some way. You were unable to prevent the situation, and you are unable to completely forgive the other person. You decide to not speak with the other person. However, you do not attempt revenge or speak ill of them. You are sympathetic and pray for them.	Assume someone has hurt you emotionally and physically. He or she truly hates you, and considers you as his or her enemy. You do not attempt revenge on the person, nor think ill of them. Rather, you love and care for them as if you two were friends.
How to do it	Be friendly toward everyone. Be honest with yourself and with others. Don't let your ego control your thoughts, speech, and actions.	Refrain from thoughts, speech, and actions of revenge. Be indifferent; neither negative, nor positive in your behavior toward the other person.	Be unaffected by other people's thoughts, speech and actions. Maintain your compassion toward others regardless of what they do to you.

### The Top 10 Steps to Forgiveness by Diana Robinson<sup>11</sup>

For many people forgiveness is one of the hardest steps of all in our progress toward freedom of spirit. Yet it is essential. For as long as we are unable to forgive, we keep ourselves chained to the unforgiven. We give them rent-free space in our minds, emotional shackles on our hearts, and the right to torment us in the small hours of the night. When it is time to move on, but still too hard, try some or all of these steps. (Note that these steps are appropriate for events resulting from an ongoing adult relationship with anyone. They may not all be appropriate for the random act of violence from a stranger, nor for someone who

was abused as a child or while in some other position of true helplessness.)

1. Understand that forgiving does not mean giving permission for the behavior to be repeated. It does not mean saying

#### Forgiveness Prayer

*KHAMEMI SAVVE JIVA  
 We forgive all living beings,  
 SAVVE JIVA KHAMAN TUME  
 We seek pardon from all living beings,  
 MITTI ME SAVVA BHOOE SU  
 We are friendly towards all living beings,  
 VERAM MAJJHAM NA KENVI  
 We seek enmity with none,  
 MICHCHAMI Dukkadam  
 And we ask for forgiveness from all.*

that what was done was acceptable. Forgiveness is needed for behaviors that were not acceptable and that you should not allow to be repeated.

2. Recognize who is being hurt by your non-forgiveness. Does the other person burn with your anger, feel the knot in your stomach, experience the cycling and recycling of your thoughts as you re-experience the events in your mind? Do they stay awake as you rehearse in your mind what you would like to say or do to “punish” them? No, the pain is all yours.

3. Do not require to know ‘why’ as a prerequisite to forgiveness. Knowing why the behavior happened is unlikely to lessen the pain, because the pain came at a time when you did not know why. Occasionally there are times when knowing why makes forgiveness unnecessary, but they are rare. Don’t count on it and don’t count on even the perpetrator knowing why.

4. Make a list of what you need to forgive. What was actually done that caused your pain? Not what you felt, what was done.

5. Acknowledge your part. Were you honest about your hurt or did you hide the fact that the behavior hurt you? Did you seek peace by reassuring the perpetrator that it was all right? Did you stay when you could or should have left? If so, then you, too, have some responsibility. (Here you start to move away from being a victim.)

6. Make a list of what you gained from the relationship, whatever form of relationship it was. Looking back you may be

focusing on the negatives, the hurts. Yet if they were repeated, you must have stayed to allow the repetition. You did not remove yourself. Why? There must have been some positives if you chose to stay around. What were they?

7. Write a letter to the person (no need to mail it). Acknowledge what you gained from the relationship, and express forgiveness for the hurt. Allow yourself to express all your feelings fully. Do not focus only on the hurt.

8. Create a ceremony in which you get rid of your lists and the letter, symbolizing the end of the link between you. You may choose to visualize placing them on a raft and watching it drift gently away down a river. You may prefer to burn them and scatter the ashes. You may invent some other form of ritualized separation.

9. Visualize the person you are forgiving being blessed by your forgiveness and, as a result, being freed from continuing the behavior that hurt you.

10. Now that you have freed yourself from the painful links and released the pain, feel yourself growing lighter and more joyous. Now you are free to move on with your life without that burden of bitterness. Do not look back in anger.

*“Go not to the temple to ask for forgiveness for your sins, first forgive from your heart those who have sinned against you.”*

— Rabindranath Tagore

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