

FROM HOUSE TO HOME

forgive & forget

क्षमा दानं क्षमा यज्ञः क्षमा सत्यं हि पुत्रिकाः ।
क्षमा यशः क्षमा धर्मः क्षमया विष्ठितं जगत् ॥

*"Forgiveness is charity, yagna, truth, glory and dharma.
The whole world is supported by forgiveness."
Valmiki Ramayan - 1/33/8*

Raj was turning 18 tomorrow. He had hinted to his father, a very wealthy Mumbai businessman, that he wanted a car for his birthday – his first car! His father was a wise man and told him that he'll discuss it over with Raj's mother. But Raj knew his father wouldn't disappoint him – after all he was the only child.

Raj woke up early on his birthday. He peaked out of the window upstairs to see if his brand-new car was outside their house. It wasn't. "Hmm, maybe he is going to surprise me with it later." Raj got ready and went downstairs for breakfast. His mother hugged him and wished him a happy birthday. She made his favourite breakfast! His father came downstairs, suited and booted, ready to go to work. He put his briefcase on the couch and placed a heavy hand on his son's shoulder. He wished him a happy 18th birthday. Raj said 'thank you' and looked at his father waiting for him to toss car keys at him. His father simply gave him a birthday card and then said, "We will be having dinner, just you and me, tonight at 8PM. Make sure you are there on time." Raj smiled. "Ah! I'll get the car at dinner," he thought to himself.

Raj dressed up for dinner and met his father at 8PM on the dot. His father sat across from him and began, "Raj, today is a big day. You've reached manhood – 18 years old. This means it is time for you to become focussed. What kind of man do you want to be? When I turned 18, my father gave me this," he said holding out a package wrapped in decorative paper, "This changed my life and I wanted to do the same for you." Raj took the package and pulled the paper off excitedly. He was expecting car keys, or at least a photo of his car... or something, but not this. He was holding a beautifully bound *Bhagvad Gita*. The pages had a golden edge and his name was embossed on the cover of the book. He looked at his dad in astonishment. His father was looking at him intently. Then finally, Raj burst out, "ARE YOU KIDDING ME! A book! What are you doing! I asked for a CAR! Not a book! If I wanted a book I would have got it myself. All of this money and you give me a book!?" Raj slammed the *Gita* on the table and stormed out of the room. His dad tried to catch up with him, yelling behind him, "Wait! You don't understand. WAIT!" But Raj was gone.



That night was the last time Raj spoke with his father. Raj went to stay with a friend in New York, went to an American university and started a business that eventually became very successful. His father tried to contact him many times over the years, tried to explain. There were many times that Raj thought about his family too, about what happened, about forgiving his father. But Raj never could get over the hurt of the last birthday he spent with his family.

One day, many years later, while Raj was at work, he received a phone call from India. His father had passed away and had left everything he owned to Raj. He was needed in India to collect his inheritance. Raj felt a dull ache in his heart. He was finally going back to his birth home after so many years. On the way back to India, Raj remembered his father's call to him, 'Wait! You don't understand. WAIT!' Guilt and regret were creeping up on him. But Raj pushed them back.

Raj reached his old house and unlocked the door. Everything was as he remembered it. He walks around the house, taking in all of the old memories. He finally made it to the dining room - the last place where he saw his father. He walks towards the dining table and stops dead in his tracks. There is something on the table. He walks closer to see it... 'Oh my God,' he thinks to himself. Raj sees the Bhagvad Gita his father had gifted to him on the table, almost exactly where he had left it. Raj picked up the book and stared at it. His thumb absently flipped the pages of the book. "What was that?" Raj thought to himself. He flipped the pages again and saw something in one of the middle pages. He flipped again, slowly this time, and saw it. He looked at the piece of paper in the middle of the book. He immediately began to cry.

In the middle of the book was a check written for the exact amount of money for the car that he wanted. On the check's message, Raj's father had written: *For Raj's 18th birthday. You're a man now, son.*

Raj held a grudge against his father for the rest of his life, and what did he get in return? A life without the guidance and support of a father and a heart full of regret.

Raj's story is a cautionary tale. We tend to get into fights and arguments most often with the people we are closest to - our family and friends. To maintain our relationships and live a complete life with the people we love, we must learn to forgive and forget. We may move on in our life like Raj did, however, holding grudges and keeping misinformed opinions about our loved ones stops us from moving on from within. Remember, external success is not the same thing as internal happiness. Forgiveness plays an essential role in experiencing inner peace.

FROM HOUSE



Decide to forgive
For resentment is negative
Resentment is poisonous
Resentment diminishes and devours the self...

ROBERT MULLER
former assistant secretary-general of the United Nations

Asking for Forgiveness

We are human and so we make mistakes, whether they are intentional or not. We can often end up hurting people around us through our actions and words. We may not be able to stop ourselves from making these mistakes every time, but we can definitely control the way we deal with the situation afterwards.

Before asking for forgiveness, it is important to spend time thinking about your actions and how they affected the person you have wronged.



Some people think that asking for forgiveness is an act of a coward. But actually it is an act of the courageous, the act of a lion. If one wishes to find peace, to move forward and to maintain good relationships – then it is crucial.

Asking for forgiveness is not always easy, but here are some simple tips that can help us:

BE STRONG, BE COURAGEOUS

Asking for forgiveness is **not for the meek**. First you have to accept that you did something wrong or hurtful. Then you have to go and admit it to the person you hurt. Neither of those things are easy. In order to ask for forgiveness, you need to be strong from within. Visualizing yourself asking for forgiveness or role-playing the scenario in your head before actually doing it are good ways to gain the confidence you may need to follow through.

APOLOGIZE

Express genuine remorse for your actions - make it clear that you are sorry. It is very important to actually say the words 'I'm sorry' or 'I apologize.' Strengthen the statement by giving details about why you're sorry.

DON'T MAKE EXCUSES

It's okay to explain why you did what you did, but don't make excuses for your actions. Make it clear that you are not using your intention as an excuse for your behaviour.

SHOW EMPATHY

When apologizing, make it clear that you understand how your actions made them feel.

TRY TO MAKE THINGS RIGHT

Tell the person that you are going to try hard and work on correcting the issue and making sure that you don't do the same thing in the future. You can express this by saying, 'next time this happens, I'll do this.'

ASK FOR THEIR FORGIVENESS

Once you've apologized, ask for forgiveness. This may be the most difficult part. There is always a chance that the person decides not to forgive you. Just be sincere when asking for forgiveness. Despite the other person's reaction, you will feel peace internally because you sincerely asked for forgiveness.

FORGIVENESS IN ACTION

What prevents us from asking for forgiveness? Many times, we may realize that we did something wrong; we may not completely understand the person's intention and perspective. Let's take a look at Priya's story and what it teaches us about forgiveness.

Priya's Story

Priya was excited about tonight. She was done with her final exams and was ready to relax! She had made plans to meet up with some of her friends. She was getting ready, when her mother walks into her room. "Oh that's a pretty dress! Where are you going tonight?" she asks. "Oh, it's going to be great! First we're going to have dinner at 5 Spice. Then we are going to see a movie, then get some dessert at CCD. Then we're all going to go to Karishma's house to hang out," says Priya excitedly. "That sounds like fun! What time are you going to get back?" asks the mother. "I'll probably be back pretty late, maybe around 1:00 or 2:00 at night. So don't wait up for me."

"What?! 1:00 or 2:00? Are you crazy? You can't stay out that late! You need to be back by 10:00 PM," says the mother. Priya couldn't believe what she was hearing – 10:00 PM? The movie starts at 10:00 PM!

"But mummy! Come on! I just want to chill with my friends tonight. I've been stressed with exams for the last month and now I want to relax," explains Priya. "Beta, I don't mind you spending time with your friends, you know that. But it's not safe to be out so late," explains her mother. "Ugh! You always do this! Why are you trying to ruin my life! My friends are expecting me to come out tonight. What should I tell them? That my mum is being stupid and not letting me out of the house?" "Priya! That's it! Forget it! You are not leaving this house at all tonight!"

Priya looks shocked. "You can't do that! My friends are waiting for me! Why are you being like this?!" "You can call your friends and let them know that you won't be joining them tonight," said Priya's mother. Priya storms out the bedroom, slamming the door shut behind her.

"Why is my mother acting so crazy? I've been working so hard to do well on my exams and I know I passed them with high marks. She knows all of my friends and approves of them. She didn't seem to mind when I was out until 1:00 AM for Karishma's birthday last month. She needs to calm down!"

The reality is that whenever we get into an argument, it is not always clear who is to blame. Looking at the above situation, can we be absolutely sure about who is right and who is wrong? Probably not, because in most situations it is always a mix. Even if we are only slightly wrong, we should still ask for forgiveness because relationships are more important than our ego.



Imagine you are Priya. What should you do? What would be the best way to handle this situation? Do you need to ask for forgiveness? For what? How should you say it?

*...Be the first to forgive, - To smile and to take the first step,
And you will see happiness bloom, - On the face of your human brother or sister...*

ROBERT MULLER



MAKING THE DECISION TO FORGIVE AND FORGET

You may believe that there are some unforgivable actions or behaviours. It is important to recognize the difference between forgiveness and foolishness. If someone repeatedly and knowingly hurts or mistreats you, then it may not be sensible for you not to keep a relationship with that person any longer. However, for your **own peace of mind, to enable yourself to move on, and to stop yourself from living in constant negativity**, it is very important to **always forgive**.

Here are some concrete steps on how to forgive someone.

CONSIDER WHY YOU WANT TO FORGIVE THIS PERSON

- Do you want to resolve your feelings of anger, confusion, or hurt?
- Do you want to relieve yourself of these negative feelings?
- Do you want to move on with your life?

- Choose to forgive without expectation of remorse or a change in behaviour from the other person. Do it because it will bring you inner peace.

CHOOSE TO FORGIVE

WHEN IN DOUBT, TAKE YOUR TIME

- Sometimes, it takes a while to untangle all your feelings.
- Ways to figure it out: write about it; talk to a trusted person about it; spend your time focussing on something else and come back to it later. But remember, sooner or later, it is always best to forgive the other person in order to experience closure and peace of mind.

- This is perhaps the most important part (and sometimes the most difficult part) of forgiving someone. We must also decide to forget the other person's actions and our hurt, in order to move on with our life.

FORGET



Are you holding onto any grudge?
Do you have any friends or family whose forgiveness you need to receive?
Is there anyone that you need to forgive?
Take this opportunity to write them a note asking for forgiveness or forgiveness.
Use the steps and tips from the handout to write your note.

To forgive is the highest
Most beautiful form of love
In return you will receive
Untold peace and happiness.

ROBERT MULLER

IPDC Essentials

Forgiveness releases us from our burdens & miseries, secures our good relationships, and helps us find peace.

1. Be Strong, Be Courageous
2. Apologize
3. Don't make excuses
4. Show empathy
5. Try to make things right
6. Ask for their forgiveness