Forgiveness

Forgiveness Therapy Worksheet

Purpose: This worksheet is designed to help you explore forgiveness as an internal process. Forgiveness does not mean approving of what happened, forgetting the harm, or returning to an unsafe relationship. It means working towards reducing the emotional hold that resentment, anger, shame, or hurt may have on you.

How to use this worksheet: Work through the sections slowly and in order, taking breaks if anything feels overwhelming. You do not need to complete everything in one sitting, and you can return to earlier prompts as your thoughts change. This worksheet can be used independently or with a therapist, counsellor, support worker, or trusted professional. If any question feels too difficult, skip it for now and come back to it when you feel ready.

1. Understanding Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a process in which someone who has been wronged chooses to let go of resentment and move towards compassion. This can happen privately, without speaking to the person who caused harm.

Forgiveness is not the same as reconciliation, excusing behaviour, forgetting what happened, or removing natural consequences. You can forgive while still maintaining boundaries and recognising that the wrongdoing was unacceptable.

Forgiveness is...	Forgiveness is not...
A decision to work through pain caused by another person.	Forgetting the injustice.
Letting go of resentment, anger, shame, or rumination over time.	Condoning, excusing, or minimising the offender's behaviour.
Choosing emotional healing for yourself.	Automatically reconciling or returning to a relationship.
Developing compassion without denying the harm.	Removing legal, social, or personal consequences.

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2. The Four Phases of Forgiveness

Phase	Focus
1. Uncovering	Understand the injustice and how it has affected your emotions, behaviour, relationships, and worldview.
2. Decision	Clarify what forgiveness means and decide whether forgiveness is an option you want to pursue.
3. Work	Begin to understand the offender in a broader way, while still recognising that the harm was wrong.
4. Deepening	Notice changes in your emotional response, find meaning, and identify ways you have grown.

3. Phase One: Uncovering

Use this section to name what happened and explore how it affected you. Try to be honest and specific, while working at a pace that feels manageable.

Prompt 1: Describe the injustice you experienced. What happened? Why did it feel unfair or harmful?

Response:

Prompt 2: How has this injustice affected you? Consider painful emotions, changed behaviour, practical costs, repeated thoughts, physical effects, or changes in how you see yourself and others.

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Response:

4. Phase Two: Decision

In this phase, reflect on what forgiveness means to you and whether it is something you want to choose. You do not have to force forgiveness before you are ready.

Prompt 1: Without looking at a definition, how would you describe forgiveness in your own words?

Response:

Many people struggle with forgiveness because they have a right to feel angry. Choosing forgiveness does not erase that right. It is a choice to consider whether holding onto resentment is helping you heal or keeping you stuck.

Prompt 2: What might be the benefits and drawbacks of deciding to forgive?

Response:

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Pros	Cons

Prompt 3: If you decided to work towards forgiveness, what might be different in your thoughts, feelings, behaviour, or relationships?
Response:

5. Phase Three: Work

This phase involves trying to see the offender as a whole person rather than only through the wrongdoing. Understanding someone's background or circumstances does not mean excusing what they did.

Prompt 1: Choose one question to explore: What may have shaped the offender's behaviour as they grew up? What was happening in their life at the time? What pressures, limitations, or choices may have influenced them?
Response:

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Prompt 2: List the feelings you currently have towards the offender.
Response:

Prompt 3: Have any of your feelings changed over time? If so, how? If not, what feelings still feel strongest?
Response:

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6. Phase Four: Deepening

In this phase, reflect on any emotional release, personal growth, or meaning that has developed through the process. Growth does not mean the injustice was acceptable; it means you are noticing your own strength and healing.

Prompt 1: How has forgiveness, or the attempt to forgive, affected your emotional health, behaviour, relationships, time, or energy?

Response:

Prompt 2: How have you grown because of what you endured and your efforts to heal?

Response:

Prompt 3: Has your worldview changed? Are there strengths, boundaries, values, or insights you recognise now?

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Response:

7. My Next Steps

To finish, choose one gentle next step that supports your healing. This might be taking a break, speaking with someone you trust, setting a boundary, returning to one prompt later, or noticing one small sign of progress.

My next steps:

8. Summary

Forgiveness is a personal process that can take time. This worksheet has invited you to understand the harm, consider whether forgiveness is something you want to work towards, explore the emotions and meaning connected to the experience, and identify a gentle next step for your healing.

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- Forgiveness does not mean excusing, forgetting, or reconciling.
- You are allowed to move at your own pace and keep healthy boundaries.
- Healing may include changes in your emotions, thoughts, relationships, and sense of self.
- Your next step can be small, practical, and compassionate.