

## Care of the mind

# Forgiving yourself and others

Forgiveness can be difficult sometimes but it contributes to an inner strength and peace of mind. As you approach the end of life you may remember those who have harmed you and the harm you have caused to others. Forgiveness transforms your mind and opens your heart.

### Forgiving Others

Forgiveness is a decision to let go and move on as opposed to choosing to hold on with anger and resentment. Forgiveness is not simply forgetting the harm done or forcing yourself to believe that it was justified. Forgiveness is a wise response that helps you to go beyond the hurt.

When you are hurt it is normal to want to retaliate or defend by reacting with anger and resentment, but these reactions only perpetuate a vicious cycle where you continue to harm and be harmed.

Another response to being hurt is to withdraw, feeling helpless and victimised. This response also does not help. It can lead to long term pain, depression and feelings of hatred and ill will towards those who harmed you. You may harbour a grudge that can only be an ongoing source of pain.

Considering the following unbiased perspectives can help you forgive others:

- They may have acted the way they did because they were focused on their own needs rather than yours and did not consider the impact of their actions on you.
- They may have acted out of anger or other negative emotions that they could not control. (Just like all of us do sometimes!)
- While you see the person in a negative light, this is not how all others see them or how they see themselves. We each see the world from our own perspective; there is no one view that is absolutely right.
- The way they acted or spoke may have been based on a simple misunderstanding.

### Forgiving yourself

Reflecting on your life, you may remember harm you have caused to others. Your unskilful actions may have occurred because of a lack of wisdom or emotions that you could not control.

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To forgive yourself, the first step is to regret. Regret is taking responsibility and openly acknowledging that you caused harm and wishing that you had not acted this way. Regret differs from guilt. Guilt is a disturbing emotion which includes self-judgement and self-criticism. If you are feeling guilt you can use the same approaches as outlined above for forgiving others.

The second step is to apologise to those you have hurt either by speaking with them directly or sending a message. Even if you cannot physically connect with the person, you can still bring the person to mind and express your regret mentally.

**Karuna also has experienced people you can talk with on:**  
07 3632 8300 or [karuna@karuna.org.au](mailto:karuna@karuna.org.au)



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