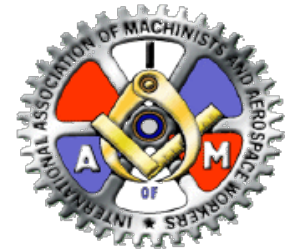




# HELPING HANDS



## The Power of Forgiveness: What It Is, Why It Matters, and How to Practice It

(ChatGPT Compiled)

Forgiveness is one of the most powerful gifts we can give ourselves and others. It is often misunderstood as weakness, approval of wrongdoing, or forgetting painful experiences. Forgiveness is an act of strength, courage, and emotional freedom. It allows people to release resentment, heal wounds, and move forward with greater peace. In a world where misunderstandings, disappointments, and hurts are inevitable, learning to forgive can transform relationships, improve mental health, and create a more compassionate life.

Forgiveness is the conscious decision to let go of bitterness or the desire for revenge toward someone who has hurt you. It does not mean pretending the hurt never happened. It does not excuse harmful behavior or require immediate reconciliation. Instead, forgiveness is about freeing yourself from the emotional burden of carrying pain. It is choosing healing over hostility and peace over prolonged suffering.

Many people hold onto anger because it feels justified. If someone treated you betrayed your trust, or caused emotional pain, your feelings are real and valid. However, staying trapped in resentment often harms the person carrying it *more* than the person who caused the hurt. Unforgiveness can become heavy baggage that affects emotional well-being, physical health, and future relationships.

Forgiveness is important because it promotes emotional healing. Studies have shown that chronic anger and stress can contribute to anxiety, depression, high blood pressure, sleep problems, and weakened immune function. When people forgive, they often experience lower stress levels and improved mood. Letting go of resentment does not erase memories, but it can reduce the emotional intensity connected to them.

Forgiveness is also essential for healthy relationships. No relationship is perfect. Friendships, marriages, family bonds, and workplace connections all involve misunderstandings and mistakes. Without forgiveness, every offense can become a permanent wall between people. With forgiveness, there is room for growth and repair. Trust may need time to rebuild, but forgiveness opens the door to healing.

Forgiveness helps people grow personally. Sometimes pain can make people guarded or fearful. Forgiveness challenges that pattern by encouraging empathy and resilience. It reminds us that everyone is imperfect, including ourselves. Most people have needed forgiveness at some point in life. Recognizing our own mistakes can make it easier to extend grace to others.

Forgiveness is not always easy. Some hurts are minor and can be released quickly. Others run deep and may take months or years to process. Serious betrayal or abuse may require professional counseling and well thought out boundaries. Forgiveness should never mean staying in unsafe situations or allowing repeated harm. You can forgive someone while still protecting yourself and limiting contact.



## Forgiving Others

- 1) Acknowledge the pain honestly. Suppressing hurt feelings often delays healing. Be truthful with yourself about what happened and how it affected you. Journaling, talking with a trusted friend, or speaking with a counselor can help process emotions in a healthy way.
- 2) Separate forgiveness from approval. Many people resist forgiving because they think it means saying the offense was acceptable. It does not. You can clearly recognize that someone was wrong while still choosing not to live in bitterness.



3) Practice empathy when possible. Empathy does not excuse behavior, but it can provide perspective. People often hurt others because of their own wounds, immaturity, fear, or poor choices. Understanding that someone acted from weakness rather than pure malice can soften anger and create space for healing.

4) Decide to let go gradually. Forgiveness is often a process rather than a one-time event. You may need to make the choice repeatedly, especially when painful memories return. Each time resentment rises, remind yourself that you are choosing peace over poison.

- 5) Set healthy boundaries. Forgiveness and boundaries work together. If someone continues harmful behavior, you may need distance, clearer expectations, or limited access to your life. Boundaries protect healing and self-respect.
- 6) Be patient with yourself. Some people feel guilty because they cannot forgive instantly. Deep wounds need time. Emotional recovery is not a race. It is acceptable to take small steps toward healing.

It is also important to practice self-forgiveness. Many people are harder on themselves than they are on others. Regret over past mistakes can create shame and prevent growth. Self-forgiveness means accepting responsibility, learning from errors, making amends when possible, and allowing yourself to move forward. Forgiveness is one of the greatest acts of freedom. It can release the weight of anger and open the heart to healing. Whether the hurt is recent or years old, taking even one step toward forgiveness can begin a powerful journey toward peace.



**IAM Peer  
Employee  
Assistance Program**

The heart and soul of the District 141 Employee Assistance Program is the local lodge EAP peer coordinator. These dedicated men and women volunteer their personal time to assist union members and their families who are experiencing personal difficulties. EAP peers do not make clinical diagnoses or clinical evaluations; they are trained to make a basic assessment of your situation and refer you to an appropriate resource for a more detailed evaluation. EAP peer coordinators will follow up to ensure you have been able to access services that addressed the difficulty you were experience

Forgiving yourself and others creates emotional freedom and healthier relationships. When you release shame, and resentment, you make room for peace and growth. Self-forgiveness builds confidence and gives you the courage to learn from mistakes instead of living in regret. Forgiving others reduces stress and bitterness that can drain your energy. It also encourages empathy, understanding, and stronger connections. Together, these acts of grace improve mental health and help you move forward. Having hope and balance leads to greater patience and kindness toward yourself and towards others

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