

The Power of Forgiveness to Heal Relationships

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ABSTRACT: The power of forgiveness can heal any relationship from friendship to marriage and as a foundation can reveal the true God power of love within one's self. This paper claims that forgiveness in relationships can eliminate judgment, fear, anger, and blame, leading to the true love that reflects God's Universal nature, and how forgiveness heals us all.

BACKGROUND

The research in this paper is comprised of the ideas and works of authors such as Marianne Williamson,ⁱ J. Donald Waltersⁱⁱ, Gerald G. Jamplosky,ⁱⁱⁱ Anthony De Mello,^{iv} and Jaquelyn Small.^v The study of their contributions reveals how healing through forgiveness, as a part of love, can be found to be the highest power known. Also, that a return to pure God love makes all the difference in the forgiving process.

This paper will explain how the use of positive and affirmative thinking can contribute to a more forgiving mindset and how it works within us to shift our perspective from an angry negative one to a more softened and loving one. In addition, the role in affirmative meditation plays in forgiving others and reinforcing it into our Higher Mind.

This research also reveals that the marital relationship is one which forgiveness can be learned even more profound due to the closeness of the relationship itself, and the karmic ramifications that need the forgiving' touch in order to stop the cycle of having to learn better ways to interact with one another. Without learning we are destined to repeat our errors.

Another important focus of this research is the discussion of how the hot pursuit of mindful and heartfelt peace is an important slice of the puzzle when dealing with other's offenses toward us. How we choose to see others, their position in our lives, and in Universal Consciousness plays an important role in learning why we all need to find our way toward a more loving and forgiving humanity.

In a world where so very few things are definite, one higher truth that we can always count on is that forgiveness heals individuals, relationships, and humanity. Without it, we are an angry and bitter person, we lose precious relationships, and become a hardened society. It's the part of Higher God Love that can never be separated or sacrificed. The act is not always easy, but necessary to keep peace on our planet, in our connections with one another, and in our own hearts.

In her book, "*A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of a Course in Miracles*", Marianne Williamson explains, "To forgive is merely to remember only the loving thoughts you gave in the past, and those that were given you. All the rest must be forgotten."ⁱ In this statement she reflects the nature and character of a God that chooses a form of selective remembering. We can consciously choose to only remember the good things about an individual, a situation, or even ourselves. Letting go of other's transgressions is a high act of God which places them in a realm of the past which no longer exists.ⁱ

Williamson further explains we can make a conscious choice from the very beginning to only see the actions and characteristics of others which reflect the good inside of them. In this we automatically eliminate the need to forgive anyone. To continually look at the wrong parts of a person is to walk according to our ego self and not our Higher God Self. In always making the choice to see the best in others we become a contribution to humanity.ⁱ This is made possible because we are all connected as one in consciousness. This is a great act of love and

healing. As Marianne Williamson teaches, “The practice of forgiveness is our most important contribution to the healing of the world”.ⁱ

What would be the alternative? It would be to walk in unforgiveness which keeps us captive to the things of the past. The past can become a prison, dark and devoid of any God Light we could contribute to others and to our world. Williamson explains that our wounds need air to heal. To hold them captive, along with those who inflicted them, is to hold ourselves captive as well. There is only one possible way to keep this from becoming a problem and that is to actively pursue forgiving others as a passionate form of service to human kind.ⁱ We can see that in this we find our high calling; our way to bring more God Light into this world and to help heal others. When looking at forgiveness in this way, it becomes an easier endeavor. We are challenged to walk according to our Higher Self and reflect God within us.

To conclude Williamson’s thoughts, to forgive is to give the gift of release to others. We release them from the past which now only exists in our minds. We release them from shame and guilt from transgressions or actions they might have regretted.ⁱ According to Dr. Paul Leon Masters, founder of the University of Metaphysics and University of Sedona, we also release ourselves from the hurt and pain which came from the human part of another being. In activating this release, we become a conduit of prosperity and of the miraculous for ourselves and our world. In the words of Dr. Masters, “When practicing forgiveness, we add to our mental prosperity. By having a forgiving heart and mind we keep our minds clear of unwanted anger or hateful thoughts which darken our view of ourselves and the rest of the world.”^{vi} This affirmative practice must become a part of our everyday living as Dr. Masters teaches. He encourages us that affirmative meditation can hold us closer to our Oneness with God, keeping our hearts open and clear of negativity.^{vi}

Dr. Gerald G. Jampolsky agrees that forgiveness hinges on God’s character to have an active form of forgetfulness when it comes to transgression, and when choosing this same character, we are acting through our Higher God Self. In his book, “*Love is Letting Go of Fear*”, Jampolsky expresses some of the same heartfelt ideas as Williamson in that our choosing to forget as God does, we also release the past, therefore the transgression lives no longer. The past can only hold us captive within our minds, so therefore if we are not thinking of certain actions they technically no longer exist.ⁱⁱⁱ He continues to express to forgive is our ultimate key to happiness in our lives. When practicing forgiveness, we take the person off trial in our minds.

Instead of walking in condemnation of the individual who has caused us anger and pain, we can choose forgiveness to cleanse away our misperceptions of another person and see only the good in them. In this action, we also return to love as our focus. “We need to remind ourselves continually that Love is the only reality there is.”ⁱⁱⁱ This being true, then forgiveness, as a part of love, is also a part of the only reality. Also, by taking others off trial in our minds, we take ourselves off trial as well. In the context of our Oneness, we condemn ourselves when we condemn others. This leads us to walk in darkness and not the light of God within us.

While active forgetting and returning to love is a profound miracle, Jampolsky believes that our first and foremost goal in the process of forgiving is to pursue peace. His claim is when peace of mind has been achieved then forgiving others is easier as it will bring greater acceptance and appreciation of the person in mind.ⁱⁱⁱ To meditatively and in a heartfelt way see another person in the light of pure Love not only brings healing to them but also to ourselves. He believes that pursuing peace is the most powerful way to begin any process of forgiving others. “Other people do not have to change for us to experience peace of mind.”ⁱⁱⁱ If we wait for others to change to have peace, it

most likely will never happen. Our lives were never meant to live according to other's thoughts and feelings but to live from the inside out and project what we have come to know and experience.

Living in a world that is continually creating dividing lines and labeling everything, it's easy to label people according to their actions. We certainly can see this being acted out in some of the racial disharmony or judgmental bigotry these days in the United States. Often, we don't even take the time to get to know someone or their motives and automatically assume we know what they think or how they think. Anthony De Mello writes so eloquently concerning labeling others in his book, *"The Way to Love: The Last Meditations of Anthony De Mello"*. We can label someone a sinner or a saint depending on how we perceive their actions without considering that they might not be aware as to what they are doing. Sometimes people act out of ignorance because they have not learned that something is wrong. De Mello suggests we see others in a state of ignorance first before we automatically label them a "sinner". "No one can sin in the light of awareness."^{iv} Once we become aware of something we cannot become unaware of it, so therefore we are then responsible for our actions, thoughts, and feelings. Judgement and unforgiveness become harder in light of this information.

De Mello likens acceptance of others as a lamp that shines its light on everyone. The lamp has not labeled anyone good or bad, right or wrong. It just shines its light. In the same respect he mentioned a tree and that it provides shade for anyone who chooses it. The tree never decides to withhold its shade because it perceived someone as wrong or bad.^{iv} Just like the light and the tree, we also should learn to walk in forgiving acceptance. Our light that comes from God inside of us is meant to shine upon those who are acting in a good way or even in a bad way. Forgiveness gives us the power to

shine upon others where we might not otherwise be able to.

We are all in a process of learning. When taking into consideration that we can make mistakes unknowingly, it is easier to understand when someone else makes one. Not everyone is vindictive and does things purposefully to hurt others. It would be best to consider that most people have the best of intentions instead of the worst. Dr. Paul Leon Masters concurs with De Mello, "People do not always know or understand they are being cruel or doing something wrong. It is most beneficial to believe the best in someone and to forgive them immediately. Give people the benefit of believing them unenlightened in an area instead of being quick to judge."^{vi} These are wise words to live by. Misunderstandings can be the focus of many a family problem, romantic relationship issue, or even world wars. It's almost as if the nature of people is to expect the worst and think the worst. This should not be so if we are to walk in immediate forgiveness, not to mention what we focus on becomes bigger. Therefore, if our focus is on a person's shortcomings first then that is what we will always see.

Jacquelyn Small speaks of the co-dependent relationship in her book, *"Awakening in Time: The Journey from Codependence to Co-Creation."* According to Small, codependent relationships are those which are bonded in human dysfunction and is considered a soul crisis.^v Often, they are characteristics handed down from family lines and ultimately, we find ourselves involved with those who reflect our life we spent with our parents and even more distantly, from past lives. The author believes our task at hand is in transforming our minds. "In order that our lives to be transformed we must learn to become the master of our Higher Mind. The way to enlightenment and to transformation is through the continual renewal of the human mind."^v

Part of the mind renewal is forgiving. Small expressed that forgiveness is a power given as a gift to one's own self. It is our heart that must

process and let go of judgements we hold against others who have done us wrong.^v She teaches is not our job to fix others, but to let them go and allow them to experience their own journey. Forgiveness does not let the other off the hook for what they have done but it releases ourselves from the pain of their actions. Small elaborates that to do this, we must die to our judgements and what we think is our right to hold onto the pain another's actions have caused.^v In this process we are free. Our adversary must walk their own journey out themselves. This never means we agree with what they have done. We forgive the person and forget the actions. We maintain the lessons we have learned from the experience. In the same respect we must also remember that forgiveness is to be extended to one's self as well. It is the only way our hearts can heal and move onward with a heart open instead of one which is bruised and closed.^v An open heart is a receiving heart and one which embraces life and others instead of shutting them off.

J. Donald Walters expresses forgiveness in the context of marital relationship and marital love. In his book "*Expansive Marriage*," he also sees the pursuit of peace as the ultimate path to forgiving others, especially our marital partner. He states, "If it is your partner who is upset, you be the peacemaker."ⁱⁱ Working through issues as a peacemaker already establishes that we have chosen to forgive without blame or re-examination of the issues. Walters adds that showing gratitude toward our partner helps our marital partner feel appreciation.

Appreciation is a great human need and shows that we value the person we are interacting with. It is very hard to hold judgements against someone when we are pursuing peace and gratitude toward another.ⁱⁱ Judgements, as we have seen expressed by other authors, are what keep forgiveness from being possible. "Be slow to judge, but ever quick to forgive."ⁱⁱⁱ It is very clear that Walters sees marriage as the perfect relationship in which to exercise forgiveness. He feels that within the marital

relationship we can experience the breaking of the bondages that have trapped us into living through our ego. Marriage is the greatest place to heal and become whole as we consciously work toward living according to Higher God Mind, leaving ego behind us.ⁱⁱ

In his book of affirmations, "Spiritual Mind Power", Dr. Paul Leon Masters affirms, "I understand that a true soul-mate is someone who is quick to forgive me, and I them, for whenever either of us has erred."^{vii} In this practice we also show a form of divine forgetting as we choose to walk according to our Higher God Self and not by our human ego. He also offers a meditation which takes us from the ego mind to God Consciousness, "Through my daily practice of meditation, I reawaken to the eternal reality of my ultimate Christ selfhood in God."^{vii} An individual who is walking according to their Christ selfhood is one who is forgiving and loving. We can be a healer in our own right as we interact with our loved one in relationship.

According to author and angel reader, Doreen Virtue, we often come back from past lives and enter relationships to settle our differences.^{viii} She interjects that forgiveness of one's self for ignoring red flags regarding the relationship to begin with, for ignoring guidance, and ignoring red flags about the person involved is important. She adds that we often come back together from past lives to forgive one another as well. This has less to do with what happened in the situation than it does in releasing anger and hostility toward the other person which hinders ourselves from growing in love.^{viii} Healing our past lives from hostility can draw healing into this life and stop the karmic circle in any relationship. Forgiving ourselves within relationship for the mistakes we have made in our choices is a huge step toward making better choices. Not every relationship choice is going to be for our highest good. Some can be very detrimental to our health, physical and mental well-being. We see this in so many abusive marriages and relationships which come together for all of the wrong reasons.

Their lessons can be hard and harsh. Forgiving one's self for the wrong choices can be just as healing as forgiving the one we chose and who chose us.

DISCUSSION

Each author in the literature review of this paper agrees there is a component of healing that comes along with the act of forgiveness regardless to how it is approached. Each has a profound idea of how forgiveness assists us or how the lack of it affects us in the wrong ways.

Marianne Williamson equates the effect of forgiveness on a broad scope to the point where the act can bring world peace. Forgiveness is a part of true God love which brings compassion to our world through the truth that we are all one in consciousness. Seeing forgiveness as a high act of love this statement rings profound, "And what is the highest internal law? That we love one another. Because if we don't we will all die. As surely as a lack of oxygen will kill us, so will a lack of love."^{vi} Our world endures enough without more unforgiveness imposed upon it. *The Holy Bible: New Living Translation*, tells us that our world has been going through pains which are like a woman in labor during childbirth. "For we know that all creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now" (Romans 8:22).^{ix}

Our earthly and human evolution depends on the healing that forgiveness brings into our world. We have witnessed through history how battles have begun. Usually they happen starting with the opinions of one who operates in ego and has some form of high office in government or in command of an impending battlefield. Every battle or war began in someone's mind who has been bent on enforcing their own ideas upon others. When we walk in this type of ego we bring disharmony with everyone we encounter. It is not our job to figure out if someone else's view is right but to find acceptance within every interaction.

The renewal of our minds as individuals is so important for healing in many ways.

Jaqueline Small expressed that the true way to enlightenment and transformation depends upon becoming the master of our Higher God Mind.^v *The Holy Bible: New Living Translation* also has words of wisdom regarding the renewal of one's mind. "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect" (Romans 12:2). Jampolsky echoes, when peace of the mind is achieved then forgiving is easier. He believes that it is the mind which keeps us stuck in the past and to our past traumas.ⁱⁱⁱ If there were to be any place to begin to forgive it would be to bring more peace to the mind.

A person who is unforgiving is rigid and has a closed heart. Closing off our hearts will close off our lives as well. In closing our hearts, we push others away from us instead of drawing them near. It is my personal opinion that we are all about relationship. No evolution of our souls can take place without our hearts remaining open to others and other's ideas. This depends on forgiving them when they hurt or harm us in any way. Although it is not as simplistic as these statements might sound, it is easier when we realize what is at stake for us. Do we really want to close ourselves off, to add harm to our bodies, to pollute our minds, or to act harshly toward ourselves and others? We should all remind ourselves that our own personal well-being is just as much at stake as anything that might occur to others we might encounter in relationship.

In his article, "*Tools of Personal Transformation: Forgiveness*", Deepak Chopra states that considering forgiveness of others in relationships is a good practice, and to consider whether forgiveness is coming from ego or from a good energy that is being sent forth in order to release one from hostility and anger. One of the best ways to heal from an offence is to activate forgiveness.^{ix} He goes on to explain that when one is unforgiving it is likely they are

operating from a desire to hang onto hostile feelings toward someone. Sometimes this comes from a desire for vengeance upon them. Unfortunately, according to Chopra, holding onto hostile feelings can have a serious affect upon a person's body. We know how important it is to forgive someone when we realize we are mind, body and spirit.^x Far too many suffer from physical ailments they cannot explain simply because they allow their ego thoughts to run rampant in their inner lives. If we only could instantly see what negative emotions do to our bodies, we might be more apt to be more loving with one another. Taking this thought further, we can inflict physical harm upon others by harming them in their minds and hearts. Judgement can be a killer of not only the soul but the body as well.

When Walters speaks of personal relationships, he considers seeing the good in others.ⁱⁱⁱ We all carry good inside of ourselves. It is so easy to focus on the harsh parts of a person or their short comings. Many marital issues would be more easily solved if we could only all adopt this practice. If we struggle with seeing good in others as a person, then maybe we certainly can attempt to see good in any difficult situation. *The Holy Bible: New Living Translation*, agrees "And we know that God causes everything to work together for good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them" (Romans 8:28).^{ix}

We might not be able to agree with a person's actions, but we can separate the person from the deed and see them as one whom God has called according to His purpose. We also should try to believe that even in a person's faulty actions there is good that can come of it if we choose to look for it. It bears repeating that what we focus upon the most is what becomes bigger in our lives. If we choose to focus on the good in others and their actions, then that is what will become larger in the life we live. We can see the harsh feelings melting away in the light of good things as we make the choice to see them. Our focus upon what we perceive as

wrong can only serve to harm our body, mind and soul, by inflicting our own stress upon ourselves. Also, focusing upon what is wrong as a person places us in the position of judge and jury when it comes to assessing their actions. This takes away from the grace of God and the active forgetting that Williamson has spoken of. If God lives within us and can look at what is good, forgetting the past and what is not good, then we can walk in our Higher God Self, shall we choose, and see what is good through active forgetting and grace.

De Mello echoes the same main idea in the choices we make as to how we might label another person either as a sinner or a saint.^{iv} His thoughts are upon focus and what we choose to see in another person. Surely if we desire to heal then it is depending upon our choice to see others for the good they bring, or we can choose to focus on what is not good. Either way, our judgement is opposite of forgiveness and could never bring anything other than stress and even illness. Not living life in ease can cause disease, or disease. We can choose to walk in Higher God Love or not. Choosing higher living is to choose love and to choose life. This becomes especially profound in marital and karmic relationships.

Dr. Wayne Dyer has an interesting prospective regarding forgiving someone who has hurt us. In his article, "*How to Forgive Someone Who Has Hurt You in 15 Steps*", he makes the point that there are many ways to activate and support forgiveness for one's own relationship health and to walk in higher God Love. What Dr. Dyer suggests is moving onward to new things in life, take personal responsibility for one's own personal actions that might have caused the issue, to focus on staying connected to one's Higher Self. Dyer writes, "When you give up interfering and opt instead to stream like water, gently, softly and unobtrusively, you become forgiveness itself."^{xi} What an awesome thought, to actually "*be*" forgiveness!

Moving on in life is an amazing suggestion toward the act of forgiveness. Sometimes it can

be very hard to forgive even though we might be really trying. Putting some space between the issue and the present moment helps a great deal. After all, the issue is already in the past and the present moment need not be interrupted by past experiences. Distracting one's mind with new things can certainly help in renewing one's mind. His second point is even more profound. Can we consider that the issue might be our fault, or that we have a responsibility in taking part in something that has caused pain between two people or others? Seeing our part in any situation takes humility on our part. This means walking in our Higher Self, as Dr. Dyer has pointed out. A wonderful goal in life would be to become forgiveness itself. This gives me the image of walking in pure God Light, with a humble heart, and the strong power of grace and healing for others and ourselves. This is how Jesus walked: with grace, forgiveness, and healing. They all seem to go together and are a powerful trio! What an amazing goal to work toward as we adventure through this life!

CONCLUSION

Can we create healing for ourselves, others, and in this world through forgiving? Even more profound, can we be the healer? In concluding this paper, the answer is a definite "yes"! Even in the words of Dyer we can "be" forgiveness.^{xi} This means a willingness on our part and an understanding of how each of us can do this on a regular basis.

According to the research presented in this paper we can all heal ourselves through forgiveness and leave the past behind us. The past is all but an illusion in our mind anyway, to only learn from, but not to live in. We can heal others by forgiving their past and releasing them from their transgressions. We can even bring healing to the world which is a High act of God for ourselves and all humanity.ⁱ

Just as love is, forgiveness is a learning experience. To not forgive is to act in judgement, therefore forgiveness eliminates judgement as an opposite. To live in conscious forgetfulness

is to release anger and blame. We no longer hold an individual or situation hostage nor do we place them on trial.ⁱⁱⁱ This is an amazing act of healing for both ourselves and any person. To be released from this prison is to be totally free. Only anger, judgment, condemnation, or hatred, can stop us from walking in love if we choose to hold on to the energy they present.

We have seen that not only letting go, but to also decide to see the good in others instead of what is not good, therefore forgoing the need to forgive in the first place.^{iv} We have a conscious choice as to what we decide to focus upon: light or darkness in others. Forgiveness is a power that brings peace to the soul by releasing what no longer serves us. It is the part of love that brings God's grace to our planet. In this, we are healers, peacemakers, and the light of God to a thirsty world.

Forgiveness is not magic, or rocket science, but a miracle! It is the demonstration of God living "within" which results in a release that places dark things into God's Light.

Forgiveness is a return to innocence in every extent of the word. Just as Marianne Williamson expressed, "Love is what we are born with. Fear is what we have learned here,"^{vi} As a part of love, the ability to forgive is what we were born with also. Look at the actions of a child. Children have an innocent ability to be upset one moment and then forgive without a thought. One moment a child might quarrel with a playmate and then the next be quietly playing together with laughter and joy. Isn't this what God desires for us: to live in passionate joy on the playground?

We have discovered through the work of J. Donald Walters that the marriage relationship is also an incredible place to learn forgiveness and its power.ⁱⁱ His ideas are echoed by Doreen Virtue, to help us get past karmic situations where anger and hostility have held us captive.^{viii}

As we are in our human state, forgiveness, along with love will always remain our healer that we can count on. Whether in marriage, friendship, with family, or in situations of this

world, we are all lifted higher in consciousness and released from bondages within the power of forgiving as a gift from our Creator.

About Jenine Marie Howry

Dr. Jenine Marie Howry's education and experience span over 10 years. Her deepest desire is that all individuals experience transformation as each one explores new alternatives in order to achieve balance, success, and healing.

Dr. Jenine is the former founder of The Lilac Center for Healing and Enlightenment in California and creator of Jenine Marie Coaching and Ministries LLC in Texas. She is in process of spring boarding a new project in the state of Texas she calls "Serenity" where clients can receive a multifaceted healing experience from various trained professionals and practitioners.

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