



TESS Newsletter

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Episode 132

“ Turning Possibilities into Realities ”

Building a Global Movement for Change [UNSG]: The Promise (part 64)



"Working Hard at Working Smart" (part LXXXIV)

Unity of Purpose: The Power of Forgiveness



Forgiveness is not always easy. At times, it feels more painful than the wound we suffered, to forgive the one that inflicted it. And yet, there is no peace without forgiveness.

Marianne Williamson

The future we want: The Promise: The Force Beyond

The Power of Forgiveness

By Naomi Drew, M.A.

"When you forgive somebody who has wronged you, you're spared the dismal corrosion of bitterness and wounded pride. For both parties, forgiveness means the freedom again to be at peace inside their own skins and to be glad in each others' presence." *[Fredrick Buechner]*

Peace is not possible without forgiveness. *Martin Luther King* once said, "Forgiveness is not an occasional act; it is a permanent attitude." The only way children can learn the habit of forgiveness is by seeing us, their parents, forgive others and forgive ourselves.

The freedom to be at peace in our own skins - that's what forgiveness allows. We relinquish this freedom when we hold onto anger and resentment. Enormous amounts of energy are wasted when we hold back our love, hold onto hate, and harbor acrimonious feelings. The only remedy is letting go, and being willing to forgive.

But how? Here are four powerful steps to forgiveness from one of the world's foremost experts on the subject, *Dr. Fredrick Luskin*:

1. Close your eyes, and for about 20 seconds, picture the person who hurt or angered you. Let all your grievances come up. Notice what happens in your body -- acceleration of heart-beat, shallow breathing, tension, etc.

2. Now let go of this image and take some slow, deep abdominal breaths. Focus on your abdomen, and imagine the breath going down into it as you inhale. Expand your abdomen on each inhalation, and deflate your abdomen as you exhale. Take about five breaths and keep your focus on your abdomen. If your mind goes back to the person who hurt you or to anything else, bring the focus back to the rhythm of your breath and the movement of your abdominal muscles as you inhale and exhale.

3. Bring into your mind an image of someone you love very much, or a place of peace and beauty. Allow yourself to be flooded with the positive feelings this image elicits. Now bring those feelings down to the area around your heart. Allow the good feelings to penetrate your heart and soothe you.

4. Lastly, keep breathing the good feelings into your heart. Now take a look again at the person you are angry at. Let the good feelings protect you. The purpose of doing this step is to break the pattern of stress reactions that normally occur in your mind and body when you think of the person who hurt you. When you surround your heart with positive energy, the power the person has had over you begins to dissipate.

**It's one of
the greatest
gifts you can
give yourself,
to forgive.
Forgive
everybody.**

*(Greatness,
Everybody)
Maya Angelou*

Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.

*(Love, Darkness, Hate)
Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Resentment is a habit, and habits take twenty-five days to change. So if you do this exercise each time you think of the person who hurt you over twenty-five days, you will literally change your mental and physical reactions. They will no longer have power to hurt you because you will have reprogrammed your own reactions. And when this happens, you start to become free.

Sometimes we need to forgive without reconciliation: forgiving for the mere purpose of forgiving. Certainly, what we strive for is to reconcile all conflicts, clear the air, and understand one another. But there are times this is impossible with a parent who has passed away, with someone who has wronged you and is long gone, with someone who is unwilling to communicate. These are the times we must dip deep into our own souls and see if we are willing to forgive anyway.

I have on the bulletin board above my desk a yellowed article written by the scholar and Holocaust survivor Elie Weisel in 1997. In it, Weisel expresses the most profound act of forgiveness imaginable. It is here that Elie Weisel expresses forgiveness toward God for the Holocaust.

In the article Weisel asks God the question he has struggled with all his life: "Where were you, God of Kindness, in Auschwitz?" Weisel had never been able to understand how a loving God could have allowed the Holocaust to exist. But out of the question that has tormented him for fifty years, Weisel gleans a sudden insight: "Watching your children suffer at the hands of your other children, haven't you also suffered?"

In this moment of **compassion**, Weisel is finally moved to offer God his forgiveness: "Let us make up, Master of the Universe," he says. "In spite of everything that happened? Yes, in spite. Let us make up: for the child in me, it is unbearable to be divorced from you for so long."

This story is a reminder to me that forgiveness and compassion are essential and possible under all circumstances. For the child in all of us, we must learn to forgive. **And for the sake of the children we love with unparalleled ferocity, we must model the most magnanimous and humbling of all acts - the act of forgiveness.**

**The weak can never forgive.
Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.**

(Strong Attitude)

Mahatma Gandhi

Forgiveness Exercise:

- Is there someone you need to forgive? Write about that person and the circumstance below. Are you ready to forgive him or her? If so, go onto the next step.
- Do the process outlined above.
- When you feel ready, complete this forgiveness statement.

I _____ do hereby grant forgiveness to _____.
I forgive you for:

- Here's what I need to communicate so that my offering of forgiveness will be complete:
- Talk to your child about the importance of forgiveness. Ask him if there is anyone he needs to forgive. If so, have him do the 4-step process, then copy the above forgiveness statement, and have him fill it out.

Nelson Mandela once said, "Resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies." You have the power to change that. **Peace** is built on the decisions we make and the actions we take in the small moments of our life. Deciding to forgive is one more way of creating peace, the most important job any of us can do right now.

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The journey continues...