

The Forgiveness Factor
By
Dr. Darlene Treese

*“Resentment is like taking poison and expecting someone else to die”
-David Owen Ritz*

A man was going over his list of all the people in life who had done him wrong, when the therapist asked, “What would you do if you were driving down the street and someone threw a bag of garbage into your car? Would you roll up the windows and continue to lament about how bad it smelled? Would you let it continue to rot there for days or even years? Would there be any reward for you to hold on to it? What would be the advantage to dispose of it and get on with life?”

That is what forgiveness is really all about. It is the most selfish thing we can do. The nature of forgiveness is greatly misunderstood. Perhaps that is why forgiving seems to be so difficult. Simply stated, forgiveness is letting go of any negativity from the past because it no longer serves you. Forgiveness is not forgetting. Forgetting, if it happens at all, is only possible after you let go. Forgiveness is not denying what happened to you or your feelings about it. The process of forgiveness starts when you honestly acknowledge the situation and your feelings. Forgiveness is not excusing the other person or their actions. You are not condoning hurtful behavior; you are putting it behind you so that it no longer holds you back. Forgiveness is unconditional. The other party may never apologize or feel regret. You can still forgive with or without the other person's participation or the need to reconcile the relationship. Forgiveness is something you do for yourself to be free from the horrors of the past.

The process of forgiveness heals your feelings and takes time. First you must be aware of what happened and the emotional pain it caused you. If you are dealing with the past, explore your memory and feelings, especially if you have denied that anything was wrong. Forgiveness begins with the decision and genuine willingness to let it go. The real work is in changing your mind about how you want to think about this. See the situation from a higher perspective. Realize the other person did not act simply to hurt you. Notice how they interact with other people; notice how they act on their own negative feelings and misguided understanding; notice where your sensitive spots are and how the two of you collided. See this as an outside-detached observer without guilt or blame or judgment. From there you will eventually move on and celebrate the personal growth you've experienced as a result of your circumstances.

As you let go of the negativity a void is created. Nature abhors a vacuum. What would you like to fill this space? Take some time and think about these things. How would you enjoy better health if you were lighter and free? How would your relationships with those who care about you become better? What would be the quality of interaction? If you had nothing holding you back, what would you do in your career and self-expression? What is your heart's desire? The answer to having it is in forgiving whatever is blocking its path...and it is the most selfish and self-loving thing you will ever do.

Dr. Darlene Treese has been in private practice in hypnosis and counseling since 1983. She is a Diplomate in Counseling with the National Institute of Sports, Past President of the American Psychotherapy and Medical Hypnosis Association and Vice President of the Rotary eClub of Southwest, USA. Darlene has been internationally acknowledged for her positive action and solution-based therapies and work with corporations. “A person for the people,” Dr. Dar is always available to help with your questions and dilemmas through office visits, email or telephone consultations. Call her at **850-201-0073** or visit **www.AskDrTreese.com**