

## 2. HOW TO FORGIVE<sup>1</sup>

<https://youtu.be/EtexaUCBI5k>

Hello there. I am Dr Andy Knox and in my last vlog I was talking about the extraordinary power of forgiveness. A lot of people who I work with say to me, *"Okay, I think forgiveness would be a really good thing for me to do. It's not going to be easy, but I don't know how"*. So, there is a foundation called the "More to Life Foundation" who do some great work. You can check out their website, you can go on some of their courses, if you feel that would be helpful for you. But they do this process called "the forgiveness process", which is really beautiful and actually takes you through just a series of steps that helps you face up to deal with what's happened and let go.

Now, you can use this process in lots of different ways, so it's very flexible and it even works to do it imagining forgiving someone who may have already, sadly, passed away. You can do it with someone one-on-one, or you can even do it in the mirror. You know, a lot of the times when we struggle to forgive, the person we struggled to forgive the most is ourselves. Sometimes, we carry around incredible amounts of guilt and shame and none of that is good for our health. And sometimes, looking in a mirror and using this process can be absolutely incredible.

So, listen, this is how it goes. The first thing you have to do in the forgiveness process is visualise the person that you need to forgive. So, if that person - if you can't do it face-to-face, just set a chair down in front of you and sit with that chair, and then imagine that you are talking to that person. Or, sit the person down themselves and say, *"Listen, there's some stuff I need to talk to you about"*. Visualize that person, look them in the eyes if you can, or at least have them in the same room as you. Or, if it's yourself, just look in a mirror, look yourself in the eyes and go through this process.

The second part is all about vocalisation, it's about saying the stuff you need to say and the first thing is this statement: *"I have been resenting you for \*\*\*\*"*. So, it is not *"You have made me feel ..."*, because, whether we like it or not, the truth is that each of us are responsible for our own feelings, for our own responses. No one actually makes us do anything, so this is about saying, *"I have been resenting you for \*\*\*\*"* and whatever it is ...:

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*I have been resenting you for the way that you spoke to me*  
*I have been resenting you for the fact that you had an affair*  
*I have been resenting you for all the hurt and the pain you caused me*  
*I've been resenting you that you never told me you love me*

Or, you know, whatever it is, whatever that horrendous thing was, "*I have been resenting you for the fact that you abused me*". I have been - whatever those things are, however painful they are, stating them and saying them out loud, I have been resenting you for this. And then you say, "*The benefit to me of holding on to my resentment has been \*\*\*\**". You see, a difficult truth is that, actually, if we didn't get something out of holding on to our bitterness our resentment, our anger, we wouldn't hold on to it. So, we might say things like

*"The benefit I have drawn from holding on to my resentment has been that it has allowed me to feel superior to you"; or,*  
*"...it has justified the anger that I have felt"; or*  
*"...it has been the way that I have had some sense of power over you".*

Or there might be, you know, loads of different reasons why we hold/have held on to that resentment or that anger. And then we go on to say, "*...but the cost to me of holding on that resentment has been \*\*\*\**", and there will be lots of different costs of the consequences of not having forgiven. It might be that we've not been able to form really good relationships with other people. It might be that we've just felt angry, or depressed, or anxious, or we've got physical pain. Or there could ... I don't want to put words into your mouth. I want to give you examples of the kind of costs that we bear of holding on to bitterness and unforgiveness.

And then, we're going to say, perhaps, some of the toughest words you might ever say. You're actually going to ask that person to forgive you, and it's literally just saying "*Please forgive me*". And you might say "*for \*\*\*\**", and you might say what those things are.

So, I was working with a couple recently and one of the things we talked about together was "*please forgive me for the fact that I maybe didn't invest as much into you, or make you feel as important as I could have done*". That's not excusing the fact that their partner had an affair, it's just saying that, you know what? I'm sorry too. And sometimes stuff happened that we were completely an innocent victim in something and what happened to us was completely horrendous and awful. A lot of stuff happens to us in childhood. But, even then,

we can say *"Please forgive me that it has taken me until now to forgive you, or to come to this place"*. Or, *"Forgive me that I felt so angry for so long"*.

And then the last one is maybe the three bravest, boldest, but most beautiful words in the English language: *"I forgive you"*. Not necessarily an emotional response; a deep, gutsy, bold and brilliant choice: *"I forgive you. I let this go. I draw a line. I say enough is enough, I forgive you"*.

And that's the process, and you may have to do it a number of times. You may find that it begins to stir up other issues and you have to go back to that person, or you have to revisit the issue in your mind. Sometimes, we have to keep forgiving many, many times, but it is the start of a process that begins to set you free. That allows lots of forgiveness to flow your way and allows you to be more healthy and well in every dimension of your life. You really can forgive and it really can set you free.

Dr Andy Knox