

# Notes on the Forgiveness Meditation

## GENERATING FORGIVENESS FOR YOURSELF

### **What is self-forgiveness?**

- ❖ Seeing faults clearly, taking responsibility for them with remorse and making amends, and then coming to peace about them: this is what I mean by forgiving yourself. - Rick Hanson, Ph.D.

### **Why do I need to forgive myself?**

- ❖ Finding a way to extend forgiveness to ourselves is one of our most essential tasks. Just as others have been caught in suffering, so have we. If we look honestly at our life, we can see the sorrows and pain that have led to our own wrongdoing. In this we can finally extend forgiveness to ourselves; we can hold the pain we have caused in compassion. Without such mercy, we will live our own life in exile. - Jack Kornfield

### **How do I forgive myself?**

- ❖ Reflect on how you have not forgiven yourself fully for any of the three types of actions you have done that have harmed yourself and which have often also been harmful to others:
  - Physical actions
  - Speech
  - Thoughts
- ❖ Begin self-forgiveness with less significant things and work up to those that are heavier
- ❖ As you do this practice, appreciate your good qualities, especially your willingness to work with your own faults in this way
- ❖ Acknowledge what you have already done in this life to learn and grow from those experiences
- ❖ Observe whatever feeling of forgiveness that arises in your heart, as well as thoughts in your mind and sensations in your body
- ❖ Engage in the practice as best as you can. Even if it doesn't feel genuine at first, it will become more authentic over time.
- ❖ Conclude by reflecting on your own values and aspirations that you want to honor and uphold in the future and establish a strong intention to continue in that direction

## ASKING FORGIVENESS OF OTHERS

### **What is the nature of asking forgiveness of others and why is it necessary?**

- ❖ Our asking forgiveness from other beings is based not on shame or guilt or blame, but on our recognition of what has happened ... the ways in which ignorance or unawareness has worked in our lives that has led to our actions, our thoughts, or our words being the cause of someone else's unhappiness, sorrow, suffering. - Gina Sharpe
- ❖ Asking forgiveness is an act of humility, generosity, and healing. Some level of regret will remain – and should – but shame and guilt will eventually disappear. Through structured meditation, we can train the heart/mind to let go, to meet past pains with understanding and acceptance. - Noah Levine

### **How do I ask forgiveness of others?**

- ❖ Reflect on the ways that you feel you have not been fully forgiven by others for any of the three types of actions you have done that have harmed yourself and particularly which have also been harmful to others:
  - Physical actions
  - Speech
  - Thoughts
- ❖ As with self-forgiveness, begin asking forgiveness with those things that are less significant, working up to heavier ones
- ❖ Thinking about those people who have been the object of your actions, truly value those relationships and acknowledge their experience of hurt or pain that you caused

- ❖ As you do this practice, be aware of how difficult it is to accept your own mistakes and to feel worthy of being forgiven for them by those you've offended
- ❖ Observe whatever releasing of the burden of those actions that occurs – the feelings in your heart, the thoughts in your mind and any sensations in your body
- ❖ Engage in the practice as best as you can with whatever level of authenticity you have
- ❖ As before, conclude by reflecting on your own values and aspirations that you want to honor and uphold in the future, establishing a strong intention to continue in that vein

## CULTIVATING FORGIVENESS FOR THOSE WHO HAVE HURT OR HARMED YOU

### **What is the nature of forgiveness for others who have harmed me?**

- ❖ Remember these truths:
  1. ***FORGIVENESS IS NOT WEAK OR NAIVE.*** Forgiveness requires courage and clarity; it is not naïve. Mistakenly people believe that to forgive is to simply “forgive and forget,” once and for all. That is not the wisdom of forgiveness.
  2. ***FORGIVENESS DOES NOT FORGET, NOR DOES IT CONDONE THE PAST.*** Forgiveness sees wisely. It willingly acknowledges what is unjust, harmful, and wrong. It bravely recognizes the sufferings of the past, and understands the conditions that brought them about. There is a strength to forgiveness. When we forgive we can also say, “Never again will I allow these things to happen.” We may resolve to never again permit such harm to come to ourselves or another.
  3. ***FORGIVENESS DOES NOT HAPPEN QUICKLY.*** For great injustice, coming to forgiveness may include a long process of grief, outrage, sadness, loss and pain. True forgiveness does not paper over what has happened in a superficial way. It is not misguided effort to suppress or ignore our pain. It cannot be hurried. It is a deep process repeated over and over in our heart which honors the grief and betrayal, and in its own time ripens into the freedom to truly forgive.
  4. ***FORGIVENESS DOES NOT MEAN THAT WE HAVE TO CONTINUE TO RELATE TO THOSE WHO HAVE DONE US HARM.*** In some cases the best practice may be to end our connection, to never speak to or be with a harmful person again. Sometimes in the process of forgiveness a person who hurt or betrayed us may wish to make amends, but even this does not require us to put ourselves in the way of further harm.
  5. ***IN THE END, FORGIVENESS SIMPLY MEANS NEVER PUTTING ANOTHER PERSON OUT OF OUR HEART.***
    - From *The Art of Forgiveness, Lovingkindness, and Peace*, by Jack Kornfield, pp.27-31
- ❖ “He abused me, he struck me, he overcame me, he robbed me!” – in those who harbor such thoughts, hatred will never cease. “He abused me, he struck me, he overcame me, he robbed me!” – in those who do not harbor such thoughts, hatred will cease. – The Buddha

### **How do I extend forgiveness to those who have harmed me?**

- ❖ Recall the particular harms that you have experienced by the physical actions, words, or even thoughts of others
- ❖ Once again, it's recommended to not start with those that are most difficult to forgive but rather to work up to them
- ❖ Remind yourself of your own imperfections and your desire to be forgiven, using that as the impetus to hold those who offended you in that same space of understanding and compassion
- ❖ Don't force it or take on more than you can handle; work with what you can forgive now, accepting what you can't forgive at this time
- ❖ Be mindful of whatever feelings arise in your heart, the thoughts in your mind and sensations in your body
- ❖ Should the practice awaken any hurt from the past, gently soften into that pain within a space of compassion and loving kindness for yourself and others
- ❖ Engage in the practice as best as you can, recognizing that simply having the willingness to engage in forgiving others is where your practice begins