CI #CH y anc. Jeff Oliver -

Self Forgiveness

Forgiveness for Everyone

Everyone is Forgiven

All beings in All directions are Forgiven...





Jeff Oliver

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udhamma@yahoo.com.au

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A Short Autobiography

l lived a very ordinary life, nothing extraordinary seemed to happen, average family, average friends, average school results, average life really.

| traveled to Europe when | was 25 and that opened my mind to the world beyond my neighborhood and gave me a taste of a greater life. | worked as an actor in a theme park which taught me about people and opened my mind even more.

| always loved nature and soon became a "Greenie", an environmentalist and a vegetarian and was meeting alternative people into herbs, healing and health, which lead me to meditation. | loved it! | wanted to go to the roots of it and thus followed my heart to Myanmar (Burma) and became a Buddhist monk.

| lived that life for about 9 years all up and then disrobed to be more informal and casual. | have built a reputation as a meditation teacher and have shared in many diverse countries, including Australia, Botswana, Czech Republic, Japan, West Malaysia and Sarawak, Myanmar, Singapore, South Africa, Thailand and Turkey.

These days | have relaxed the traditional meditation and share more generally about mind training, including ways for acceptance, appreciation, awareness, concentration, compassion, forgiveness, relaxation, realization, unconditional love and wisdom. Though | have not yet perfected all of these within myself, | believe | can share what | have experienced and surf with spiritual friends who join me along the path of peace.

Speaking of **spiritual friends**, | would like to mention the kindness of Mr. Hynek Sechovsky in Czech Republic for giving me a laptop computer some years ago and | told him, "| will write a book with this!" This is the book!

Also all of my beautiful friends in Turkey who always support me and make me feel like family.

In Bangkok, Venerable Phra Pandit and the Little bangkok Sangha have supported me greatly. Khun Nay and Dhammodaya Meditation Centre in Nakorn Pathom, Thailand.

In Malaysia, Koh Mui Han has facilitated my annual sharing tours and Chin Hock Soon has supported me since my monk days. Dhamma friends and monks in Taiping and Subang Jaya Buddhist Association in Kuala Lumpur. There are so many societies and individuals in Malaysia and other countries who support me, too numerous to mention here, you know who you are and I appreciate all of you.

My mother and sister are also my great benefactors!

Of course, | wouldn't be what | am today without my many teachers since my beginnings in 1992, especially Venerable Chanmyay Sayadaw, Sayadaw U Indika , Sayadaw U Tejaniya and Adya Shanti, to all my teachers | give my thanks, pay my respects and ask for forgiveness for my shortcomings.

Sharing mind training skills is my only "work" and | live on the satisfaction it brings. | am open to invitations to share my experiences in new places with new people.

Thank yourself for being open minded and interested enough to open this book and explore possibilities that otherwise you may have never known existed.

> Jeff Olíver October 2013

> > "Many people think they need meditation but what they really need is self forgiveness!"

"It is probably the most powerful way of detaching from the past and opening up to the here and now."

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> "The only way that TRUE forgiveness works is with TRUE HONESTY and WISDOM."

PERFECTIONIST WARNING! The following book was written and edited entirely by me, all content and context all mistakes, punctuation, grammar and terminology is my own work and I am warning you, it is NOT PERFECT! Like me!

> COMPLACENIST WARNING! This book is not just for reading, it is for DOING!

INTRODUCTION

Some Words About My Words

| am not an author as such and not really a writer, | write the way | speak, simply and | hope also clearly so everyone can understand me easily. | have given many talks on forgiveness in many different countries and in many different ways and | even recorded some of the talks in the hope that | would transcribe them but | found it is better to write from my heart just as it is to speak from it.

Writing this book, for me, is not to just end up with a book, it is more about compiling information and experiences that | have had so that | may improve as a human being. If it helps others along the way, then | have done a good thing for them, for myself and for both them and myself.

| write informally and therefore bypass formal grammar and punctuation and | wouldn't give anyone the suffering of editing my work, so it is all my own stuff! All spelling mistakes, grammatical errors, layout, format, font, even the cover, artwork, photos,

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everything except printing is all my own work and | forgive myself for my imperfections, | hope you will too! (Forgive yourself, that is, hehe!) There's a good point! When reading, | forgive myself for having imperfect reading and comprehension skills. Often | will read something and then | forget what | just read but hey, that's how the mind works, there's no point beating myself up about it, so | relax and either read it again or just let it go... |f it is important, | will remember it when | need it, | trust my imperfect mind.

You may read this with some obsessive correctional, perfectionist mind and make yourself annoyed or stressed because | am not following the rules or there are unnoticed spelling mistakes, etc. Try letting that go and just read without expectation or judgment, reading with acceptance and forgiveness, now there's a challenge for you!

Some things you read here you will love and cherish and others you will disagree with and want to argue about them. Take the good bits that appeal to you now where you are along your path and leave the rest. Basically, whatever you read here, take it or leave it, do whatever you like with it, it's not mine.

When | told people | was writing a book, they were immediately interested because they thought it was about something exciting until | told them it was about forgiveness, haha! Then their faces would change and they would say something like; "Oh ok, nice." Naturally, my spiritual friends rejoiced!

Personally, I have not yet perfected forgiveness and perhaps I never will, in fact, I have never perfected anything, which was one of my wake-up realizations, I HAVE NEVER PERFECTED ANYTHING! So, it shows me I have to let go and not expect perfection in myself, in others or in the world. That in itself is a little taste of freedom! Forgiveness is about freedom, freedom from within, self-liberation, for it is only ourselves who "imprison" and punish ourselves and it is only by ourselves that we may be liberated.

So Friends, | ain't no saint! And if you see me in an unforgiving mood one day, please forgive me as | will forgive myself and hopefully we can both learn and grow wiser from that experience. Life is for learning.

Although | was a Buddhist monk for almost nine years and | am often invited to share in Buddhist places with Buddhist people, | am not selling Buddhism nor am | trying convert anyone. In fact, | use plain English for some common Buddhist principles so that everyone can feel comfortable reading them and understand easier. This book will be available to Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Atheists, etc from all around the world. It is not a Buddhist book, it is for anyone who is interested in reducing their suffering in this very life.

In writing this book, I have had to use both modes of reality, **conventional reality**, the one we believe we are experiencing here and now with stories and concepts. And **ultimate reality** which is beyond concepts and cannot be understood by merely thinking and philosophizing about it but can (I believe *wink, *wink) be realized and understood through personal experience. Actually, there is only one reality but we can only talk about and understand it by using concepts. This is always tricky territory to explain because we are attempting to use concepts to explain the non-conceptual. So please be patient with my flowing into and out of these so-called, "two kinds of reality".

Also, | am not a psychologist, | am definitely not a professional, everything | am writing about here is coming from my years of meditation, introspection, contemplation and sharing.

There are many different ways of forgiveness and another way may work better for you than this one. | can't remember ever reading a book solely about forgiveness. | practiced the way | have explained here in this book and experimented with it personally since the end of the last century (oh man, that sounds so long ago!!). Since | gained such benefit from it, | share it and now | get even more benefit from it and get amazing feedback from diligent people who really put the technique to work.

Occasionally, someone will come back to me and complain about the technique or say it doesn't work but with respect, it is not the technique, it is the one who is lazy or wants someone else to solve their problems for them or those who are attached to their past and their suffering and *don't want to* or are not ready to be truly free. That too is fine, there are no miracles in this technique or in this book as such, YOU ARE YOUR OWN MIRACLE! Jeff (free) Oliver

"The freedom of Forgiveness is so BEAUTIFUL that you don't want to keep it for yourself, you naturally want to share it WITH ALL LIVING BEINGS!"

"WAKE UP and REALIZE your OWN TRUTH!"

INTRODUCTION TO FORGIVENESS

Why Forgiveness?

The reason | share forgiveness training is due to my own experience in meditation. Years ago, when | was doing long meditation retreats, even up to seven months long, | found that | would from time to time get "stuck" on old issues from the past. For example an old relationship would come to mind and the mind would review and replay past events and actually recreate those old emotions and confusion as if it was happening now. Then the mind would be so concerned about this old issue that it couldn't be with the present moment experience, it would get lost in the past. On other occasions, it would think about and regret the good opportunities that it had missed and wish to go back in time and play it out in a different way but as you know that is impossible except in one's own imagination. Of course that didn't stop me, | would sit and review and re-arrange

the past until | felt satisfied or bored. The strange thing is that when | would think about it again the next time, it was almost as if | couldn't remember how had re-arranged it last time and would do it all over again! The mind was just entertaining itself repeating old stories, re-arranging them and replaying them, for what? The idle mind can be very creative and imaginative, just ask any meditator! Do you remember as a child when you had few responsibilities, how you would dream and fantasize with careless abandon? You may also know what it's like when you are lying in bed and can't sleep, the mind wanders and even scares itself with negative and fearful thoughts. In our busy daily life, often there is no time for the mind to wander, it usually has a task at hand or is occupied with reflecting on the task just done or the next one to come. There are usually people and entertainments or communication devices around to distract us away from our present moment truth. Similarly, when we are sick or incapacitated, we may have a lot of time to remember and reflect on the past, for better or for worse.

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Then there is the death process, where some may say, "My life flashed before my eyes!" A quick review of one's pro's and con's before passing or in the case of a long drawn out death, one may have too much time to reflect and indulge in one's memories and sufferings. Actually, having this time to reflect is a good thing because we have a chance to see and know how the mind really works. As | said, when we are busy with work, people, entertainments, etc, we don't know ourselves, we direct all our attention outwardly and don't look inwardly. We have been highly trained to observe the external world but know nothing of our internal world. Make some quiet time in your life to get to know yourself better, see how your mind works.

One thing | came to realize is that even though | am considerably well traveled, | still don't know this world. After | visit any place, it changes! The next time | visit it is different, so effectively, | am visiting a new place, this even refers to my home, which seems the same but is always changing, that means you can never visit the same place twice. You can by concept but not in reality, it is impossible... hmmm, interesting huh?

We deludedly think we know this world but we don't even know ourselves and we don't know this mind which is the processor of the information that we receive from the world through our five physical senses. This world only exists in our mind due to our perception of it and each of us have our own perfectly unique perception. So another insight arises; "I can't know anything in this world in exactly the same way as anyone else, for no one else has my perception and my conditioning (past experiences)."

Basically, the mind is all over the place, seemingly crazy at times, it is definitely deluded, untrained and ignorant and thus causes itself a great deal of unnecessary suffering. However when we understand this and realize how the mind works in its true nature, pure forgiveness naturally arises. **How does pure forgiveness arise?** The most important point is information, like you are reading now. Learning that forgiveness exists, that it is possible and an option for everyone, how it works, what its benefits are and how to apply it. This is the first step to pure forgiveness, the rest just flows.

Forgiveness is About Karma

| can't fully explain Karma here, it is a mind blowing subject but hopefully | can offer some simple ways to understand Karma and its concepts.

Karma is not just referring to past lives, it is also about this life and this present moment. Karma means, action, cause or "work", it is something that is done. But that is only half of the equation, for every cause there must be an effect and for every action there must be a result. This is not a religious law, it is a natural, scientific, universal and an eternal law, which is not made by human beings, however we are all affected by it, whether we like it or not. The main teachings of Karma seem to come from Hindu or Buddhist teachings but they did not invent it, they discovered it. It is not their property, it belongs to all of us and in fact, all beings, in all forms and realms everywhere, even insects, animals, ghosts, angels and gods are subject to this natural law. It is not a

human law, it is beyond heaven and earth, beyond time and space yet we all feel it in everything we do, say and think. In every moment of our existence this cause-and-effect relationship is unfolding without our permission, without our control and in fact it has nothing to do with us but we take it completely personally and create such immeasurable suffering for ourselves due to our lack of understanding and misunderstandings of it.

Can you forgive yourself for not yet understanding karma and causing your own suffering? Can you forgive the history of humanity for their ignorance? If not, that's perfectly understandable, please read on and see how you feel in six months or a couple of years from now...

We have all been conditioned by our environment, parents, families, teachers, the government, food, culture, in fact, everything we have experienced in the past has made us who or what we are today.

Physical actions, verbal speech and our mental thoughts are the three modes or types of karma.

We can never know when the results of past karma will manifest. In this moment, we are the manifested effects some of our past actions, speech and thoughts which combine with the present conditions to create our future, which will in turn combine with the then manifesting effects and present conditions, and so the wheel of life turns endlessly. This is known in some traditions as Samsara, the cycle of life, which not only includes birth, life and death but is also dependent upon this very moment.

If you want to know whether you are creating bad karma for yourself, just check your **intention**. Sometimes, we may harm another intentionally or unintentionally. To harm with intention is heavier or weightier karma and to harm someone without intention, by accident or even without knowing, we can say is lighter karma. Both ways, the harm is still caused by you but the most important element in the karmic effects to oneself is the intention with which the speech, action or thought was performed.

When we do anything with a harmful intention, it will produce harmful results to the doer sooner or later. Similarly, when we do anything positive, it will give a positive effect at a time when the conditions are right for it to manifest. However, both positive and negative causes create effects, which in turn become causes and thus the wheel of life turns and for those of us who "wake up" even happiness becomes a trap of endlessness. Then just as the law of karma itself is an effect, there must be a cause for it too, if that cause is removed then this seemingly endless cycle of positive and negative, life and death, etc, can be transcended. We cannot remove the law of karma but we may look within ourselves and see how or why karma affects us.

Karma is not a personal possession, we experience it but nobody owns it, it is universal and thus all we can do is accept it and surrender to it. We need to understand it, we don't need to remove it as such. It is a human trait, that when we have a problem we try to get rid of it but that doesn't solve anything because it can just happen again and again and we continue to suffer. If we FULLY understand any problem, then it ceases to be a

problem, problems only exist due to ignorance, our lack of understanding. So we need to investigate deeply anything that we feel is uncomfortable or unpleasant in order to know it in its true nature and then there will be no fear or resistance to it. It is our resistance to the way things are that is causing us suffering. If we could only realize that the world, people, this body and this mind have their own unique nature, which is governed by universal causes and conditions, then we would have nothing to worry about, we would simply go with the flow as the wise ones do. You could forgive yourself, others and all beings in all directions simultaneously and feel infinitely free but like most people you don't believe it is that simple, it's a shame isn't it?

Some people believe in fighting for what they want. That is fine too, that is their way, it takes all types to make this human world the way it is. We can't all be quiet and peaceful and we can't all be warriors or world changers. You have to know yourself, know your own unique path and be strong enough to follow your way, believe in yourself and your way as long as it is harmless to yourself and all beings. **What do you want?**

All of us have been born into this world for reasons unbeknown to us. Have you found a satisfactory answer to the question; "Why am | here?" Probably not. Being born in this life is the result of dying in a previous life. We all come to this world with our own unique personality traits, even identical twins can be quite opposite in their behavior. Mild mannered parents can have wild children and vice-verse. For example, ten newborn babies in a hospital nursery and you will see ten different characters, a sleepy baby, sickly, bright, grumpy, calm, etc. Their personalities come from their past life karma manifesting in this life. This explains why things happen to us in this life that seem to have no immediate cause. | ook at Princess Diana, so beautiful, so proper, famous, a good mother, kind and compassionate, we can say she had amazingly "good" karma but then to be suddenly killed in a car accident ("bad" karma) seems to have no cause or reason in this life. Maybe you believe

God did it for whatever reasons, that's fine. Karma is more scientific but it is still hard to prove exactly and in the end it relies on one's own faith and beliefs. I am not trying to convert or change your mind in any way, just offering you a different view of life so that you can find your own unique and individual truth.

Karma is also about natural balance. | believe that the whole universe and everything, including spiritual issues are in a flow of constant balance. Actually, balance is a human concept, | am sure it doesn't really exist because everything is already in balance, even what appears to us to be out of balance is actually already in balance, it is only our *seemingly* unbalanced minds that perceive it that way. This is great because we may come to realize that there is nothing to do, everything is in a constant flow of balance and all we need to do is trust it. How is your universal trust right now?

Good and bad, right and wrong, punishment and reward are worldly reproductions of karma. In our human world, we seem to live by the concepts of right and wrong. Yes they exist but only as concepts, even our whole life (past, present and future) is a concept then the concepts of right and wrong are as real as anything else. If somebody does something wrong and they know it to be wrong, they will, sooner or later feel ashamed, guilty, sorry and remorseful. This is the natural law of karma beyond concepts, it is purely cause and effect. Humans however, like to take this law into their own hands and have created the punishment and reward system, it is as old as humanity itself, so we tend to not question it, that's just the way it has always been.

When we practice forgiveness, we are reflecting on our past actions, speech and thoughts. With self-honesty, awareness and wisdom, we are learning from our mistakes to help prevent repeating those mistakes and thus removing the cause of suffering for the future what a relief! Here, we are using the law of karma to our advantage, this is wisdom in action.

Sickness and Forgiveness

Another aspect of karma and forgiveness is that by not forgiving ourselves, we keep a lot of negativity within our minds and many people believe this is the cause of sickness and diseases such as cancer, stroke and heart problems. By internalizing our guilt, anger, confusion, stress, fear and worry, it manifests as tension, pain and physical ailments. Internalizing means not releasing, holding onto, personalizing and taking ownership of it. This is natural and we believe, "| AM THF PROBLEM". Well, there may appear to be a problem but | am not the problem as such, it is external or in reality doesn't exist at all. Or they believe, HAVE APROBLEM but how can you own something that only exists as a thought, a concept? Another person may not see your problem as a problem at all, in fact they may see it as a blessing, a miracle. There are no problems in reality except in the concepts of your mind. This will become clearer as you read on, please be patient.

Forgiveness and Meditation

Many people come to learn meditation because they want to solve their problems, which at this moment are ALL in the past (think about that...). We can't meditate effectively if we are worried about our past. Many people are "blocked" by thinking about their past which they don't realize they are still carrying around in their heart. We need to understand this and watch it go...

Many people don't need to meditate, they need to practice forgiveness!

Even people who say they have "finished" their forgiveness can still have some very deep rooted issues that they have overlooked, don't know about or "choose" to avoid. Most people | meet practice forgiveness very superficially and some get amazing results but they are not deep-rooted and long lasting. When they practice this technique with an open mind and some persistence, they come back to me and admit, that they *thought* they had let go of that old stuff but obviously they hadn't. Some people feel that they haven't done anything wrong in life and have nothing to forgive, if so, that's great! Most of us have never objectively looked at our own behavior. Anyway, I would still recommend that you read on, maybe someone you know could use forgiveness in their life and its better to have practiced it and then share from your own experience rather than just quote mere words from a book. I believe that sharing from your heart is the true way to share.

This form of forgiveness is not a formal meditation practice. It is an analytical, reflective and contemplative practice. This may turn some hardcore meditators off because they've been told not to analyze but that only applies when you are engaged in formal meditation, this forgiveness is for daily contemplation, anywhere, anytime. Only yesterday | was contemplating forgiveness while making pumpkin soup!

Although forgiveness is not a formal meditation, it is definitely mind training and mental

cultivation, it is extremely beneficial for the mind, conducive to peace and happiness, thus in turn, serves us greatly in our formal meditations.

Forgiveness practice as | present it here is really an exercise in awareness, in fact you can't do forgiveness without awareness (and wisdom). Becoming more aware through forgiveness means knowing how your mind is reacting and responding, knowing your emotions, seeing the stories and concepts that the mind believes and attaches to and understanding the true nature of the mind - this too is mental development and progress along the path to awakening and enlightenment.

Forgiveness is not Selfishness

Neither is meditation, self love or enlightenment. For people who have been brought up on saving others or working for the benefit of others (only), this practice may seem to be a selfish one, however, one must work on oneself first in order to understand clearly before helping others. Like a doctor that studies and practices for many years

before serving the community, we also must understand our own mind clearly so that we may be of more benefit to mankind and in fact, all beings. We must be skillful in the way we help others and that takes training and working on oneself. The enlightenment of one being does not only affect that single being, it has a ripple or domino effect to all other beings, either directly or indirectly. If you have ever met an enlightened person, you would know what I mean. The way they live, speak and act is thoroughly inspiring and the power of their prayer is incredible! I think the world could do with more enlightened people, even just their presence makes a huge difference. Our forgiveness also manifests in our speech, actions and thoughts and affects all beings around us.

The Simile of the Cave

Generally speaking, we use the mind like living in a cave. Instinctively, we live at the front of the cave where it is light and sunny with fresh air but then we throw all our garbage down the back of the cave where no one goes but sooner or later it starts to build up and stink until it's so bad that we want to find another cave. Similarly, we live on the surface of our minds, where we are pretending to be bright and happy and we push our traumas or unwanted, confusing and negative memories and emotions to the back of the mind, where they build up and eventually cause a nervous breakdown or at worst, suicide. Or these old emotions just stay there and simmer and rot and fester, living a miserable life until eventually we die with these dark and ugly emotions in our hearts.

We develop these habits of avoiding the truth as children because we don't understand the grownup world of greed, hatred and delusion, with people arguing, fighting and harming each other and even harming us, it is very confusing. So when we can't deal with this (because we weren't taught how to) we just hide our traumas, resentments and fears in the back of our hearts and get on with life. We become the masters of suppression, we also may attempt to fill our emptiness with obsessions like excessive sport, over working, over eating or even by totally withdrawing into ourselves, becoming introverted. These are quite common in our modern world of stress and emotional pressure. However, it is unnecessary as we have mind training techniques to repair and prevent such suffering.

Sometimes, the most happy and bubbly people | have met are the ones with the deepest suffering. They are doing what society has told them to do, "Be happy!" "Get over it!" "Rise above it!" They, their egos, have become the masters of DENIAL. The ego is also a master of deception, even to itself, it tries to cover up the truth but that cannot last forever, at some point we admit to ourselves that we are fooling ourselves and thus forgiveness is the medicine.

So if you would like to continue to live in this beautiful cave that you are blessed with, you need to do some spring cleaning. You need to go into the back of the cave and start cleaning it out. Yes it is very disgusting but it was you who put all that garbage back there, it is your mistake and it is your responsibility to clear it and maintain it. Be gentle and patient with yourself, go slowly, take out the small easy to move garbage first and work your way up to the big, difficult stuff. Nobody wants to face this old stuff from the past but the fact is, it doesn't go away, the more we ignore it, the more it rots and becomes worse, that's why no matter how hard we try to be happy, we can't be. This is unnecessary.

These days, when at home, I visit my mother every day in a nursing home. It is a great place and the staff really care for the residents but no matter what we can do for their comfort, they still have their own internal sufferings and most of it is about the past. They also have fear of the future which is based on their past. Fear of death is natural, because we are afraid of things we don't understand. We are also afraid that we will go to hell for our mistakes and misdemeanors. Strangely, even good people are afraid of hell. Maybe people think they haven't suffered much in this life and fear the afterlife will be worse. Generally, many of us have a negative view of the future, which unfortunately can

stay with us all of our life until we die, this is very sad and unnecessary.

Our modern economic and physical culture doesn't teach mind training, how to see and know the mind and how to deal with emotions, we were always told to "forgive and forget" and "let it go", "move on", "be brave", "don't dwell on the past", which is all very good but we don't know HOW? Read on...

Forgiveness and Religion

We can find the wonderful teachings of forgiveness in all religions of the world. Some of them focus on it more than others and they have their different ways of practicing it. The forgiveness that I am sharing here has it's roots in ancient India but came to me from modern America. To me, if something works, it doesn't matter where it comes from or what name we call it as long as it is practiced, the benefit gained and then passed on to others.

When | was living in South Africa, | received an email from a Buddhist source with a version of this forgiveness in it and | adapted and applied it to myself and practiced it earnestly and gained great insights and benefits from it. At that time, it was much needed in South Africa and | shared with anyone who was interested.

In some religions, people are advised to confess their sins to the religious leader and therefore absolve them but in most cases, this is quite superficial as they know that if they do it again, they can just confess again. Does anyone have the power or the right to pardon you for your sins? If so, why? How? Are they themselves pure or divine? Perhaps it is only yourself who can pardon and liberate yourself. Can you allow yourself to be free?

True forgiveness is always associated with honesty, awareness and wisdom. You can't just forgive yourself and then intentionally do the same bad, wrong, evil thing again - That's not forgiveness! Part of forgiveness is correcting the mind's behavioral patterns, that is how it works! It is not superficial or temporary, it is deep and eternal.

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In other religious practices, people may pray to God to be pardoned for their crimes. Does this really work? Where is God, external or internal? Is he/she an external being, living in another realm or dimension? Or is god within us, a part of us or all of us? Are we God? If God is within us, then we could say that by truly and sincerely forgiving ourselves we have also been forgiven by God. How does that feel?

Why is it that some people can feel freely forgiven while others even after begging for it for decades can't feel it? Are they looking or asking in the wrong direction? There are many examples of men facing the death sentence who have seen the truth of their crime and completely absolved it within themselves, they are free, happy and ready to die. Death can strike at any time. How about you, are you ready to die, now? Forgiveness is an essential preparation for death. After completing forgiveness we feel ready for death, ready for life!

In monasteries, I have often heard monks, nuns and laypeople chanting forgiveness very melodiously but then noticed that their speech and behavior does not reflect the words that they chant. This leads me to believe that they think that chanting is enough and that chanting *is* forgiveness.

Forgiveness is a universal human quality of heart and is not the monopoly or property of any religion or race. It's very useful for anyone who wishes to live a great life, to be free from their past, to live wholly in the present and create a bright future for themselves. In short, being a better human being and living in peace and harmony within themselves and with everyone and all beings. Even non-religious people, especially psychologists and psychotherapists believe in the power of forgiveness. In fact, I have given non-religious talks entitled, 'Forgiveness, The Pathway to Heaven' because "heaven" is whatever you perceive it to be.] believe it is a mental state that can be experienced here and now. I have often reflected on my life and thought that | am already in heaven, no need to wait till | die, haha! The saying, "Heaven on Earth" starts to make sense when you have practiced

forgiveness to a large extent. Is heaven on your itinerary? What do you want? | believe, heaven is not a place, it is a quality of the heart.

Misunderstandings About Forgiveness This term, "Forgive and Forget" needs to be

discussed, investigated and understood because | feel many people are misled by it and confused about it.

To me, it comes from those who have not yet experienced true forgiveness for themselves. In fact, for most of us self-forgiveness is a foreign term and an unheard-of practice.

True forgiveness ONLY comes from within oneself, from the centre of one's own heart. It is not about words or thoughts, ideas or beliefs, it must be felt, experienced and understood from within. It is not even about other people, it is ONLY about yourself. So forgive and forget appears to be misinformation, it may not be good advice for some people. Usually the term only refers to forgiving someone who harmed us and this can be very difficult to do especially when the emotional pain is very deep and long lasting. In fact, it is unreasonable to expect someone to do that after a traumatic experience and there are no alternatives offered, so we withdraw into our cave and suffer in silence, unnecessarily.

The forgetting part is even more difficult and unrealistic. Is there a delete button in our mind we can press and all the bad old memories disappear? No, we have already tried that like a thousand times and it still doesn't work BUT WE KEEP TRYING! It is amazing what crap the human mind can attach to and have faith in! The reason we cannot forget an old harmful incident is because we relate to it, we associate with it, we believe in it... WE BELIEVE WE ARE OUR PAST!

> Are we really? Am | my past? Am | now who | was then?

So the point in this new forgiveness is not to forget or delete memories but more to awaken to the fact that they do not serve us except to learn from our past behavior and find a new harmless path for ourselves. When we have understood how, by repeatedly replaying our old stories we create more and more suffering for ourselves, we find the cause for our suffering and remove it.

First cause is ignorance, | didn't know | was causing myself suffering.

Second cause is my attachment to my old stories (false ownership).

Third cause is the repeating of old stories as if to beat oneself up again and again.

After we have practiced forgiveness deeply and in detail, we will experience three benefits; First benefit is that old, bad memories arise less frequently. Second benefit is that the old memories are less emotional and less intense.

Third benefit is that they don't last so long.

After more awareness and wisdom, those old memories just don't arise anymore, so there is no need to forget them, wisdom simply doesn't attach to them anymore and *naturally* they don't arise. These are some of the benefits of forgiveness practice.

Another misunderstanding is that if we forgive another, they will think us to be a loser, weak or inferior. Well they may think that, however, we are not initially doing forgiveness for others, it is for ourselves. Let them think whatever they want to think, you are the one who is waking up, becoming more aware and more wise. They are still stuck in their past and they can't see you as you are now, they only see you as they remember you. THAT is not you, you have changed and moved forward. Here, some genuine compassion for them may arise because you are learning how to unravel your suffering from the past but they may still be lost or struggling. **May they be free from their suffering too!**

Even though we begin our practice of forgiveness for ourselves, as our hearts change and awareness and wisdom grows within us, people around us can feel it and it affects them too. Forgiveness manifests in your actions, speech and thoughts, even it shows on your face and in your demeanor. Everyone that you meet will benefit and in fact all beings will feel the effect of your grace and integrity as you become a Noble Being.

People also think that forgiving oneself is just a lie. Again, they are right, for within *their* mind it is a lie. They have never practiced it nor experienced it for themselves, they really have no idea what true and honest self-forgiveness feels like. Only one who has practiced this forgiveness thoroughly can truly understand it and say how it is. True forgiveness is never based on a lie or deception, that is impossible. We cannot lie to ourselves (actually we seem to do it all the time), we know that we are lying and it doesn't work but we pretend that it does, we pretend to "forgive and forget" but we can't and the suffering keeps boiling away at the back of our heart, sadly. This is called DENIAL. It is soooo common and so normal that people don't even realize that they are doing it. Most people we know are in denial in many ways and when we look within our own heart, we see this in ourselves. Ask yourself; How long have | been denying my own truth? How long have | been pretending to be happy and covering up my pain and deceiving myself and everyone that | love?

> Pure honesty to yourself may be the most difficult thing you will ever do in your life!

Pure forgiveness is never weakness but in fact, is an amazing strength! Forgiveness can reinstate the lost, unlimited power of your mind. When you succeed in forgiveness, you can succeed in anything! Inspire and motivate yourself and you will never have to rely on anyone else again in your life. In fact, you will become the source of inspiration and power for others, maybe many, many others in your lifetime! You are an angel in progress! Why not? We are all spiritual beings, no exceptions, even criminals and politicians, they are just not focusing on their hearts at the moment but they will one day, like us! Rejoice in your own awareness and wisdom, no matter how insignificant it may seem to be, it is more than you had before! And it is growing day by day!

Step by step

Another thing that you will come to understand through your own experience is that there are three distinctive steps to this practice and it will work best in this order.

- 1. Forgiving myself for harming another.
- 2. Forgiving myself for harming myself.

3. Forgiving another for harming me.

Even after | have explained in detail about the three steps someone will come and complain that they can't forgive a certain person who harmed them. They are trying to do the third step first! That's why | want to write a book about it, so | don't have to keep repeating myself, hahaha! The first step is called the first step because we practice it first. Not only do we practice it first but very deeply and in much detail, then we naturally evolve into the second step and only after that is experienced and realized deeply can we know how the third step works. It is cause and effect unfolding naturally.

Be patient...

Forgiveness also develops patience, most importantly with oneself but also with others and all beings in all directions.

STEPONE

Forgiving Myself For Harming Another

Have you ever seriously stopped and thought about the people you have harmed in this life? Do you care?

Often we are not aware that we have harmed someone, which is due to a lack of awareness or interest but also due to **JUSTIFICATION**. We may harm someone in response to them harming us therefore it seems justified but the truth remains, you harmed them. "They hurt me so | hurt them!" That seems fair! "They deserved it!" A parent can beat a child as punishment or to "teach them a lesson" and it seems right to do so but the truth remains, you harmed them, physically and emotionally. Justified? How do we harm people? When we ask this question with an objective awareness, the answers can be quite revealing. Here are some examples of how we harm others, a few of these might "ring bells" for you;

Turning off the love

"The Silent Treatment", ignoring someone or cold heartedness.

Verbal abuse ~ lying, deception, name calling,

degrading, swearing, etc.

Physical abuse, spanking, beating, bashing, etc.

Bullying or forcing someone to do things they don't want to do.

Psychological abuse, emotional blackmail, causing mental disturbance, worry and fear.

Neglect and disrespect.

Disobedience, resistance and non-compliance, for example, toward parents or teachers.

Harassment due to gender, race, religion,

appearance or sexual preference.

Lack of consideration, selfishness or greediness, not sharing.

Hatred, anger, aversion, revenge or holding a grudge.

Delusion, confusion and generally misunderstanding others and ourselves.

The list goes on, doesn't it? Do you have a few of your own unique ways that you have hurt someone? You might like to make your own list, write them down, I dare you but you probably won't because you (like most of us) don't really want to know the truth of your own mind. That's ok, for now.

The technique here is one of self inquiry, a series of objective questions about yourself as you were in the past. It must be done with a relaxed and open-minded attitude but remember, **it is just an experiment**. Please don't expect too much because that may only lead to disappointment and more suffering for yourself. **Please remind yourself**,

l don't know what will happen, anything can happen!

The above reminder is to realize and release expectations and may be used before sitting

meditation or as a daily mantra, anywhere, anytime, | love it! |t works because it is the TRUTH!

The Technique for Forgiving Oneself

We start by remembering a time when we hurt someone, maybe verbally, physically or emotionally. It may have been today, yesterday, last week, last month, last year, 10 or 20 years ago or when you were young.

At this stage, some people say, "I didn't harm anyone, they harmed me!" This is not about what others did to you, it is ONLY about what YOU have done to another. Be objective! Also be careful of DENIAL it is one of the strongest of our deep dark mental states, another one is GUILT, while others are **remorse and regret**, which cause restlessness in the mind and can sometimes spin out of control into self hatred and depression. These are self destructive mental states, like viruses in your computer system, they prevent you from functioning normally. So initially, we need objective awareness and honesty to admit that these do exist in our mind, sometimes this is the hardest part - self honesty and seeing one's own faults.

The first question is; WHO HAVE I HARMED?

Let any person come to mind. The harm could be verbal, physical or emotional. Be careful here, don't get lost in the the old story, forgiveness is not about the story like; "I said this, she did that, he was wrong, I was right!" etc. That doesn't work, you have tried that thousands of times. Especially don't go into *justifying* your actions at that time, that is the opposite of forgiveness, it distracts your attention away from what harm YOU caused. Even if they harmed you a hundred times and you only harmed them once, that's it!

So who pops up on the screen of your mind as soon as you ask that question? If it is someone with whom you have a deep dark history of troubles and suffering, then it might be best to put them aside for now, let's start with someone light, someone easy that you have only harmed a little bit and remember, this is an experiment, let's see how you react and feel....

Now we need objective awareness, ask yourself;

HOW DID I HARM HER/HIM? By speech, action or thought?

These three are like a human being's three modes of existence, we are always doing these three. It is also our Karma. All of these have results and perhaps now you are feeling guilty now about harming that person, that is a presently arising experiential result from what you did at that time.

It seems that even thoughts can harm people. It is our thoughts that precede our speech and actions. These days, scientists are measuring thought waves in a field outside of the body. So our thought energy is not restricted to our head or body, it radiates around us. That could also be part of our aura, the energy field around the body, which I would say is mostly caused by our thoughts and emotions. That's why we may feel bad when close to a person with negative thoughts and emotions. You may like to document your experiment and experiences with forgiveness. Write down the person's name and now confirm how you harmed them by speech, action or thoughts. If it was a oneoff incident then you may identify just one of the above, however if it was a long term relationship or partnership, then you may have to admit that you harmed that person in many ways. We can make it multiple choice if it's easier for you.

Something like; HOW DID I HARM HIM/HER? A. Speech B. Action C. Thought D. All of the above

That is all you need to know for now, just the facts about how you harmed them, no more story.

The next question is also objective and impersonal, it is only about the mental process in your mind at that time. Again, in the case of a long term situation with someone, like a partner, parent, child or sibling, then D would be most appropriate.

HOW WAS MY MIND? A. Greedy / selfish B. Angry / aversive C. Deluded / confused D. All of the above

These are *generally* the three most common mental states that we have on a daily basis, they are arising and passing away due to present conditions. Some call them negativities or "defilements" / "impurities" of the mind as they appear to contribute to our problems and sufferings. I see them as normal and natural functions of the mind, thus I don't reject or fight with them. They come and go due to conditions, that's all. Try to identify one of them, that's all, no need to judge or criticize yourself - just RELAX. If you are not sure why you harmed that person, then it was number three, confusion. Fear also comes under the third category.

For example, if with this person it was anger, you may even say that word to yourself, making a mental note, *"angry"*. Listen to yourself say that word about yourself, how does it sound? How does it feel to be honest with yourself?

Again, the story is not important, we are not justifying what we did, not trying to solve the problem or get rid of the anger, just stay with the facts about your state of mind at that time - be objective and honest, say to yourself "angry" and let it be, let it go...

Now ask yourself two related questions about your mind at that time;

WASIAWARE?

Usually not. You may have intentionally wanted to harm them but that was not awareness as such, especially it was not conscious awareness. A sub question may be; How was my intention, negative/impure or positive/pure?

What is your simple and honest answer? WASIWISE?

Definitely not! Wisdom does not directly or intentionally cause harm to others or oneself. Wisdom was absent. Ignorance, foolishness, confusion, a lack of understanding was present. This is the key to forgiving oneself! If wisdom was present | would not have done that for sure! AMISORRY?

Hopefully the answer is YES. If it is NO, then don't continue to try to forgive yourself for harming this person, drop them and try another person, someone easier, someone whom you only harmed a little and to whom you really are sorry. This will help you to build confidence in the process of forgiveness. Start off easy and work your way up to the more difficult situations from the past.

If the answer is YES, you may think to yourself, "Now I realize that harming another not only brings them suffering but brings self-criticism, blame, guilt, judgment and punishment to myself, this is not what I want. I don't want to harm anyone or myself anymore, I AM CHANGING, I A MIMPROVING."

"That was how | was, not how | am and not how | will be..."

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At that time, there were many things | didn't understand. Especially | didn't think that | would feel guilty like | do now. | also didn't understand that by hurting them, | was actually hurting myself. | definitely didn't understand the law of karma. | didn't understand them, | didn't understand myself, | didn't understand life and the way of this human world... IAM SORRY!

IFORGIVE MYSELF!

Say this gently to yourself a few times, speak to yourself softly with compassion and listen to these words, let them soak into your mind. Let them echo down the corridors of your mind. Allow these words to fill your mind and overflow to every cell in your body, embody forgiveness, become forgiveness and feeeeeel it! Acknowledge how it feels. Has the mind changed in any way? Know and understand this process of self forgiveness, know how it works and later you can share your experience with others. This is why I say that true forgiveness cannot be without awareness and wisdom. Say it again! Repeat as often as you like... IFORGIVE MYSELF (I forgive my "old self", haha!)

> "That was who | was, not who | am and not who | will be..."

MAY HE/SHE BE FREE FROM SUFFERING!

Wherever they are, whatever they are doing, may they be free, not only from the suffering that | caused them but from ALL kinds of suffering!

Just because you wish this, it doesn't mean that it will happen but it is your intention that is important. Therefore this wish must be genuine and pure straight from your heart. How is that achieved? Wisdom arising from one's own personal experience with suffering. If you deeply want to be free from suffering, then you know everyone else does too.

The Seven Parts to Forgiveness

- 1) Who have | harmed? (Wise reflection)
- 2) How did | harm them? (Investigation)
- 3) Why did | harm them? (Honesty)
- 4) Was | aware? Was | wise? (Wisdom)
- 5) Am | sorry? (Sincerity)
- 6) | forgive myself! (Forgiveness)
- 7) May they be free from suffering!

(Compassion)

This is excellent mind training! Please repeat this exercise for a week or a month or even 6 months or until you find no more guilt or regret in the mind. This is a very nice feeling, it's a bit like when we are traveling and living out of a suitcase or backpack and have the chance to wash all our dirty clothes and hang them out in the sun to dry, ahhh! Fresh and clean!! The mind feels light and clear!

As time goes on, we may have to repeat this first step of forgiveness as there are very deep roots to our emotional memories, however, the bad feelings will become weaker, shorter and arise less frequently until they eventually disappear. Later on, we find that those previous bad memories may still arise but there are no more emotional reactions to them, this is peace! Those memories will also reduce, fade and disappear, more peace! Now you are understanding forgiveness from within!

Excuses to not do forgiveness

People will sometimes say to me things like; "| have already finished all my forgiveness!" "| can't forgive myself because | know that | will do it

again!"

"| have no willpower!"

"| have no awareness!"

"] am not wise!"

My responses to the above statements. "| have already finished all my forgiveness!"

Not like this you haven't! And the type of forgiveness you are talking about is forgiveness for others and | believe that often only works superficially but doesn't disentangle the mind from

previous events, it just whitewashes over them, which is ineffective in the long term. I just had a lady come to practice Vipassana (Awareness and Wisdom Meditation) with me for nine days in Turkey. usually introduce forgiveness as a prelude to Vipassana to get people's minds working more deeply but also if any issues about the past come up during their meditation practice they can use forgiveness to help understand it. She is a very nice lady, well educated and said that she had already tried forgiveness. Anyway, | encouraged her to pick it up again and try this new method. She was very diligent and applied herself well to not only the forgiveness but to everything | shared. Here is an excerpt from an email she sent me recently, it is unedíted:

"I had really nice time at Marmaris practicing Vipassana for the first time and for a long period. I still continue doing every day what I have learned (may be some minutes or some hours).

| want to share with you what an amazing thing happened to me a couple of days ago. First | want to say that | practice "forgiveness" (1st step) continously...and sometime 2nd step.

My father ask me forgiveness...he said that in his subconscious he has a feeling that he hurted me in someway, and he is quite sure to have done it, and he asked me to forgive him...

It is incredible, for all his life he gave all his love and support to my brothers and was always has contradictions with me. And now what happens? It is like a miracle for me, the first time that he is saying how much he loves me and appreciates me. Saying that he can rely on me more than his sons, etc.etc."

Please don't underestimate the power of forgiveness! We get back what we put out. Here she was only practicing the first and sometimes the second step but the father somehow picked up on it and asked her for forgiveness, | agree, it is like a miracle!

A similar incident in South Africa, a friend with whom I shared the practice of loving kindness came back and reported how amazing it was and how his usually angry customers were all so nice to him now! | had ONLY shown him how to love himself, nothing else!

Working on yourself changes your perspective, it changes your heart and how you see the world and others can feel it and they change.

Change your mind, change your life, change your world!

"| can't forgive myself because | know that | will do it again!"

Well this is the beginning of breaking that vicious cycle of mindlessly harming someone, then feeling guilty and beating yourself up and then feeling bad that you haven't changed and so you don't change and do it all again!

You have to practice the first step, try forgiving yourself for very small harmful things you may have said or done to someone and see how it feels. Get the wheel of forgiveness turning, don't just sit back and say, | can't do that! | try not to use this word, CAN'T. Be honest with yourself, you DON'T WANT to forgive yourself because you feel you are bad and SHOULD be punished! Where does that idea come from? Is it your parent's way, your society's way, how long have you been thinking and acting like this towards yourself? 10, 20, 30 years? When will it stop?

How long do you have to punish yourself? When does the guilty feeling end?

Well YOU started this self punishment and only you can end it TODAY! NOW! This is the only moment you have! Practice forgiveness now or live out your life in self administered suffering and stop complaining about it!

If you really understand this cycle of self suffering, you WILL want to end it, you just have to be brave enough to confront yourself with pure and strong self honesty, and wisdom will work everything out naturally, TRUST THIS PROCESS...

"| have no willpower."

This forgiveness is the practice of

strengthening the mind, try it, be patient and keep practicing! See that old way of thinking change as the wisdom grows.

Also, be careful of what you keep telling yourself. Sometimes when we are helping people with mind training techniques, we may offer them a **mantra** to chant or repeat. A mantra can be a sound, syllable, word or sentence that when repeated can help to clear the mind and bring it into deeper concentration or awareness and insight. An example might be when someone needs to learn about death, we may offer them the mantra;

Life is uncertain, Death is certain.

By repeating this as a reminder of the truth, the mind will gradually come to believe it and we begin to live more in the moment, appreciating everything in our life and living life to its fullest.

So the mantra, "| have no willpower", will become embedded in the mind and that's what you will get, no willpower! What do you want? | want to be free from the cycle of self-suffering,

IFORGIVE MYSELF!

IFORGIVE MYSELF!

IFORGIVE MYSELF !!!

Try that for a mantra, everyday, as often as you remember it!

OR try repeating a positive affirmation mantra;

I AM WORKING ON MYSELF, I AM CHANGING, I AM GROWING STRONGER EVERYDAY!

"| have no awareness."

This is actually not true, You must be aware to know that you have no awareness, do you see? That is awareness! Awareness can be developed, it gets stronger, more frequent and is always "on standby", which makes the mind so strong that eventually, we simply trust that our awareness (and wisdom) will be present when we need them, there is no doubt... oh wow, that is such a relief in life! There is no need to worry about anything anymore because awareness and wisdom are a natural part of our daily life. When they are present, there are no more mistakes and no more intentional suffering, not to others nor to oneself, niiiiiiice! Just don't expect awareness to be present ALL the time, it too comes and goes, be honest and realistic.

"] am not wise!"

This too is not true. Some people seem wiser than others but everyone has their own intrinsic wisdom, we just need to access it, use it and trust it, which incidentally, most of us have never been told is possible nor have we been trained in how to identify and employ it. This is the beginning.

To develop wisdom we must first use the wisdom we have and for you it is the fact that you were wise enough to pick up this book and keep reading until this point but now you must apply what you have read otherwise it is just more nice concepts.

Using wisdom creates more wisdom!

As wisdom and clarity of mind develop in the present, we realize more and more how unwise we have been in the past and thus the need for forgiveness practice. So it is an on-going process and even becomes a natural way of life.

My advice for this first step of forgiveness is to continue with it for as long as it works for you, maybe a month, six months, a year, you will know when to change to the second step, you will feel different. What I have found is that the first step naturally morphs into the second step and there is no decision made to stop this and start that, it just evolves and flows ~~~~

Also we realize that when we harmed anyone else we were actually harming ourselves and we start to feel sorry to ourselves quite naturally. So the second step is a natural progression and even a part of the first. To be honest, there are not "steps", forgiveness is forgiveness but people often need a structure, a path to follow and it helps when sharing with others.

Face to Face Forgiveness

Of course, this is not only a mental exercise to be practiced solely within your own mind, naturally we may go to that person and ask for forgiveness face to face. This is really not so easy to do, it takes a lot of courage to confront someone that you have harmed and admít your fault, say that you are truly sorry and ask for forgiveness. Some people and even some cultures would see this as "losing face". They may also think of it as showing weakness and "surrendering to the enemy." They may also see it as putting yourself below that person, so that they may look down on you, like you are a loser. The only loser here is the person who has not forgiven or rejected forgiveness either within themselves or from another. When forgiveness is practiced correctly with a pure and honest heart, there are no losers, only winners. Forgiveness is not weakness it is only strength and getting stronger!

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I understand that people will react to forgiveness in those ways but this is a spiritual practice, it goes beyond interpersonal, racial and cultural boundaries, it even goes beyond worldly boundaries, this is about YOUR HEART and your spiritual path of purification. **What do you want?**

Remember, this is not about them accepting your forgiveness, whether they accept and forgive you or not is irrelevant to your own forgiveness and trust within yourself. If they forgive you it is a bonus and you can celebrate it but don't rely on it because other people may not have woken up to the extent that you have and that is ok, we accept everyone as they are. By asking them for forgiveness we may be showing them how to forgive too.

Someone recently said that it is not up to me to forgive myself, only the other person can forgive me! Then you may be waiting for the rest of your sad life. If it is solely up to the other person, then we may never be forgiven and live with guilt and regret for the rest of our lives! Your guilt and suffering is only ever up to yourself otherwise we may never be free, enlightenment would be a fairytale.

Practicing forgiveness doesn't make you higher or holier than anyone else, don't develop a SPIRITUAL EGO out of this practice. Remain humble, quiet and simple but strong and solid as a rock within yourself. Forgiveness builds inner strength and self confidence, which feels great!

Absentee Forgiveness

Other than face to face, we may also contact them in some way like a phone call, SMS, Skype (almost face to face, hehe!), email, facebook, even a good old fashioned letter or whatever, however you feel is appropriate. Don't be shy or just take the easy way out, meet or talk to that person, show strength of character in this exercise. The best way is face to face, person to person, heart to heart but if that is not possible or toooo awkward then use other forms of communication.

If that person cannot be traced or has passed away, then you may be satisfied with simply practicing within your own mind or if you feel you need something deeper, you may perform a ritual or prayer. You may go to your usual place of worship or any temple, shrine, church, etc that you feel is appropriate and formally ask for forgiveness with particular attention towards that person, keeping in mind that you don't know where they are now but trusting that this spiritual environment will convey the message for you. Similarly, you may go to a place of peace in nature, like the beach at sunrise, the mountain top at sunset or a waterfall or any special place. You can make up your own meaningful words or you could say something like;

[Name,]

wherever you may be now, | sincerely apologize for harming you. At that time | was unaware and unwise. | was [selfish/angry/confused] and | didn't understand you, | didn't understand myself, nor the way of the world, please forgive me. You might like to add; | am waking up, | am working on myself, | don't want to harm myself or anyone again, | will do my best to be a great person!

Forgiveness for harming other living beings

In life, we may intentionally or unintentionally harm other beings such as insects, animals or perhaps even spirits or angels.

Naturally as we move around this planet, we will inadvertently kill or maim insects along our path, it is unavoidable. Just going for a walk in the park, you may be harming uncountable living beings under each footstep. This is regrettable, especially for the sensitive soul who doesn't want to harm any living beings, however, it is also a fact of life. Your other options are to look very carefully where you put each and every step or to not go anywhere, both of which are not very practical nor enjoyable. This is where forgiveness comes in. Sometimes when | am taking my mother for a "walk" in her wheelchair along a concrete path by the lake, | see ants in a line across the path, | do my best to avoid them but it's impossible. So | check my intention and it is not to harm any living beings but simply to take my mother for a walk. | try to avoid them and | apologize, | say | am sorry, | wish them well and then | let it go, that's the best | can do. Perhaps a wiser person would do more, | don't know.

Imagine how many beings we run over in our cars everyday! We don't need to get paranoid about this, **just do your best and let go of the rest**, that's all you can do, nobody can ask for more than that.

Most of us don't intentionally kill or harm any animals in our daily life. Sometimes people feel guilty about eating meat in front of me when they find out | have been vegetarian since 1990. There's no need to feel anything about eating meat, eat it and be happy, if you are not happy eating it, then don't, it's too easy! People who used to enjoy fishing may suddenly feel remorseful about killing fish but that too is ok, especially if you follow the technique of forgiveness above. Basically, at that time you were not aware and not wise, now you know that harming living beings is a form of harming yourself and you don't want to do that anymore,

that's how you were, not how you are and not how you will be...

| realized that being vegetarian is not free from blame either, most of our fruit and vegetables are sprayed, which | guess kills uncountable insects, | am sorry about that. | am not prepared to solely live on organic food, so | just take whatever is available and again check my intention, which is to sustain my body and not harm any living beings in the process. Sometimes, | think it might be better to kill one big cow and live on that rather than kill all those insects. Even if you grow your own veggies, you will need some form of pest control or very patiently pick each bug off each plant...

I am not sure how ghosts or angels may be harmed by us, perhaps we may offend them with our behavior or encroach on their territory, I don't know. All these years of staying in monasteries, forests and ancient and secluded places, I have not yet met an angel, ghost or spirit. So I am not very qualified to talk on this subject but there are many stories of spirits being upset by humans. All cultures have beliefs in spirits. If you feel you have harmed or crossed some spirits, you can ask for forgiveness from them and offer your sincere apologies, it doesn't do any harm.

| have for a long time been trying to live a harmless life. Unfortunately, due to a lack of awareness and wisdom and sometimes just bad timing, | may say or do something that someone is offended by and | need to verbally ask for forgiveness, mostly it is a misunderstanding and poor communication. Now we may understand ourselves a lot better and we can move on to the second step of forgiveness...

Forgiveness is NOT about others, it is about YOURSELF.

The only true forgiveness is that within your own heart, don't wait for it to come from others, for that is merely a reflection of your own forgiveness.

STEPTWO

Forgiving Myself for Harming Myself

Usually, when I am sharing forgiveness with a group, especially in a retreat or workshop situation, like to ask the friends present; "How do we harm ourselves?" get answers like; Smoking Not exercising azíness Anger Worry Sadness Working too hard Stress Self judgment / criticism

Junk food Impatience Self doubt / lack of confidence Perfectionism Blame / self-punishment Self hatred Drugs / alcohol / addiction Greediness Selfishness

The list doesn't end there, make up your own answers, | challenge you.

What if I asked the question, WHY do we harm ourselves? Wow! That is an entirely different question but not so many answers. The main answer would be ignorance because we don't know that we are doing it to ourselves, once we realize this, we may begin to reduce it.

Self forgiveness is a kind of miracle, please don't underestimate the power of this practice. Sometimes we may regret making a bad decision or remorse for not making a good decision, both ways we make suffering for ourselves. We also have high expectations for ourselves (perfectionism) and thus tend to judge, criticize, blame and punish ourselves, which is unnecessary. These are just old "programs" that you "uploaded" when you were a child, in your teens or at some stage in your life, perhaps they were coping mechanisms. Maybe you learned it from others around you who were also deluded and misinformed, untrained. | say that, not as blame but as a realization that our families, teachers and societies are not enlightened and do not know how their minds work and quite frankly, they are not interested until something goes wrong with their life. Consider yourself fortunate to be reading this and learning more about the deeper and more important aspects of your mind and life.

STRESS

There are many ways in which we harm ourselves but we think that it is normal because everyone else does it, such as stress. We think stress is caused by work or the boss or kids, parents, traffic, exams, etc, but it's not. Stress is neither external nor is it caused by external situations, it is completely internal. It is caused by your own ignorance of the truth, you don't understand those things and so your mind reacts strongly to them and causes itself stress. Even when you read that, your ego will resist, saying, "I know my work!" "I understand traffic!" Oh really, then why are you stressed about them? "Because they don't go THE WAY I WANT THEM TO!!" You see, you don't understand that they have their own way beyond your control, as all things do, even your mind (that's deep!).

Stress is a natural mechanism of the mind, which is an attempt to re-balance the mind. So it is normal and natural, it is not a bad thing, it is a sign, it is showing you something that you need to learn - it is a lesson.

Investigate stress. Try to find a selfsatisfactory answer to each of the following questions; **What is stress?**

How does it feel in the body?

How does it feel in the mind?

How does it affect you?

How do you react to it?

What else is in the mind when you feel stress, are you angry, afraid, lazy, bored, worried, tired, THINKING?

WoW! Stress is not just stress it is a whole universe of experiences! Man, what a great teacher!

Can you forgive yourself for causing your own stress because you didn't understand what it is and what causes it? A quick remedy for stress is to break it up into it's components. Stress is like a tightly closed fist, which is actually made up of four fingers and a thumb so fist is a concept! Make a fist now and look at one finger and open it, stretch it out, the fist is breaking up and becoming weaker. Now look at and unfold another finger and another and another until your fist has completely disappeared! There is no fist! Stress is made up of many different emotions, feelings and experiences, if we look closely at one of them, the stress is already weakened. Then examine another and another and

soon you will see there is no stress left at all! Try it, it works! So, next time you are experiencing stress, try to ask yourself; "What is REALLY happening now?" "What am I REALLY experiencing?" Things like; anxiety disappointment frustration impatience tiredness fear

anger

tension

and so-on. What is YOUR stress REALLY made up of? Make your own list.

Another way is to choose one that you are experiencing right now and ask yourself; "Why do | react like this within myself to external circumstances?" Remembering that the cause is not "out there". An example may be impatience; "Why am | impatient?" "Because | want this to be faster than it is!" Investigate deeper... "What's the reality?" It is the way it is. When you reflect in this way and use your own wisdom, there is nothing to be impatient about. NOW look back at the stress, you will probably find it is gone for at least two reasons. One, because you diverted your attention away from the external situation and looked inwardly. Two, because you now have awareness and wisdom in the mind instead of stress. It is simple isn't it? And hopefully you learned a few new things about your mind while the stress was dissolving, nice!

Stress is your teacher, don't make it go away, feel it, learn from it, understand it and forgive yourself for reacting in an old conditioned way! Enjoy your stress!!

FEAR

How about fear, can you believe that it too is not caused by external objects, events or people

but by your own thoughts and imaginations? This may take some time for you to fully understand but there are no external causes for fear as such, only ignorance, the lack of understanding within yourself. That is not a reason to blame yourself, we cannot understand something unless we have learned or experienced it, therein lies the foundation for forgiveness. Yes, we can say there are scary things in the world but we may look into our own fears within ourselves as conditioned responses to external stimuli and take responsibility for them. Again, be aware of them, feel them, learn from and understand them. When an internal fear is fully understood, the external situation is no longer a problem.

For example, you may see a dog and you THINK it's going to attack you - that's THINKING/IMAGINING! It hasn't attacked you and maybe it won't when your attitude changes from closed and resisting to relaxed, open and accepting. I am not saying let the dog attack you, use your wisdom and act accordingly but know that the fear is within you. (Often the dog afraid too!)

You hear a noise when you are alone at night and THINK it's a ghost - that's THINKING/ IMAGINING! See how your mind jumps to the worst case scenario, it is conditioned that way, understand it.

Most of our fear is from having no control over a situation, which is silly because it is only our little ego that THINKS it has control in the first place, which is one of my favorite realizations;

"All things have their own nature independent of my ego."

That means that my ego is not controlling anything, it just THINKS that it is! That is perhaps one of the most crucial definitions of an ego, the erroneous thought that it has power over anything or more seriously, everything! Thus when it is faced by it's own powerlessness, it is afraid, confused and it fights, struggles and resists!

We can't control anything, not even our own mind but we **think** we can and so we **believe** we can and based on that belief, it SEEMS that we really are controlling everything! That is not only **"the illusion of life"** that people talk about but it is more correctly known as **DELUSION!** THAT is SCARY! Hahaha! But when you wake up to it, it isn't scary at all, it seems normal and natural, even obvious and you may think to yourself, "How come | didn't see this before?"

We are all seeing our own controlessness (new word!) everyday and we are frustrated by it, we know it is happening but we don't know what it is, no one has explained it to us... it is just "normal". Greed, hatred and delusion are borne from this, as is a whole mass of suffering! Unfortunately, we can't just snap our fingers and "wake up" from this "blackout" but we can use the information we receive and apply it to our life by inquiring and investigating the truth as much as possible.

Investigate this fear as it arises; What is fear? Why does it arise? Why does it disappear?

How long have | had this fear/When did it start? |s it necessary? (Maybe yes, maybe no.) Does it make me happy? |s this what | want? Why does fear NOT arise?

l love these questions, they can be applied to any mental state, positive or negative, remember it is just an experiment, an exploration into the unknown.

ANGER

It is the same with anger... You see someone you don't like and you get angry because you THINK / REMEMBER the story about them and you get angry. That is you making yourself angry, they didn't MAKE you angry, you did it all by yourself, within yourself! Then you will usually THINK or PLAN what you're going to say and do to them, these are YOUR thoughts and YOUR imaginations and it is YOUR anger and so this is YOUR problem.

We cannot blame anyone else for our anger!

No one can *make* you angry, it is you being angry about them.

In fact, you do not even make yourself angry, it is only causes and conditions that cause anger to arise. If you didn't meet that person, the anger would not arise. Remove the cause and remove the effect, this is part of the simple law of Karma. If you don't think about or remember them, the associated anger will not arise, simple huh? We are conditioned to resist anything unpleasant or anything which is not in accordance with our wishes. We have learned this from family, friends, society and perhaps it is also some innate quality or characteristic that has carried over from past lives. Not at any point did you say to yourself, "Now | will learn how to be angry, | will teach myself anger." |t is a natural part of the human mind and our society and our own personal character, this is not your fault, you are a human. Ever since the beginning of this human realm, there has been anger, fear and stress, they were here before you were born, they exist now and

will continue after you die, this is nature and it is natural ~ forgive yourself.

With all three of these mental states, stress, fear and anger and most of the others mentioned above, we are the ones who are replaying and repeating these "negativities", we want to blame them on someone else but that doesn't work, it just causes more suffering. So we need to recognize and understand this "cycle of suffering" before we can be free from it.

The Simile of the DVD

For example, you have had a disagreement with a colleague at work today and it is not yet resolved. All the way home you keep replaying the situation and making yourself upset as if it is a DVD with visuals, audio and feelings. When it plays to the end, you press play again and make yourself upset all over again. You repeat this many times along the journey home. Then when you get home, someone asks; "How was your day?" And so you replay it again and upset yourself and probably

the one you shared it with. Then when it is time to sleep, you can't because you keep replaying this bloody DVD of the incident and upsetting yourself. Why do we do this to ourselves?? Lack of awareness is the first answer and ignorance is the second, we don't know that we are causing suffering to ourselves. Actually, all the while you are blaming them for all of this suffering. THEY ruined your journey home, THEY spoiled your dinner, THEY kept you awake! No friend, as strange as this may seem, IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THEM! This is all YO(JR conditioning! You are the main actor in this DVD and you are also the director, producer, cameraman and you are the audience too because YOU are the one who is pressing play again and again! What happened at

work is finished, leave it there, be aware of the mind that wants to replay old situations and cause itself to be unhappy. It is strange that the ego will do this to itself but it is all part of being something, identifying with something, even a drama, in fact it loves dramas, it gives the ego something to complain about and therefore it can justify its own existence and self-righteousness.

All this can be reversed, if you WANT to. First of all, when something goes wrong with someone, like a misunderstanding, clear it up immediately, talk about it, ask for give forgiveness if necessary and let it go. If it happened at school or work, don't take it home and spread it, if it happened at home don't take it to work or school and share the negativity around, there are enough dramas in the world already. Secondly, if you see the mind going over the same old scene in the mind, PRESSPAUSE! Don't get involved in the story, don't be the audience, see the emptiness of the story, even ask yourself; "Who is listening or watching this story, who am | playing it for?" Feel the emotional suffering associated with it. Ask yourself; "Is this useful?" "Does this help me?" "Is this what | really want?" See that it is useless.

PRESS STOP, EJECT AND "FRISBY" THAT DVD OUT THE WINDOW... Now enjoy the peace and ask yourself gently; "What shall | play now?" How about the self-forgiveness CD?

"| forgive myself for causing my own suffering!" "May | be free from suffering!"

"May my colleague be free from suffering!"

"May all beings be free from suffering!"

Technique for Self Forgiveness

Here is the first question, similar to forgiving oneself for harming another.

HOW DO I HARM MYSELF?

Have you ever thought about this before? Probably not. It may be physical or emotional or both. You might like to make a list, in fact, I highly recommend it. The more you contemplate this, the deeper it gets and the longer the list becomes. At first, you may be shocked and think that you could never forgive yourself for ALL of those things but be patient, this practice is amazing! See what pops up on your mind, just one thing at a

time, some examples might be;

eating too much

breaking self promises laziness competitiveness with myself and others self doubt/lack of confidence lack of concentration impatience judging/blaming/punishing insecurity

Yes, this list goes on and on, make your own list, find some deep causes for your own suffering.

In step one, I gave four options as answers to this main question;

HOW DID I HARM MYSELF?

- A. Speech
- B. Action

C. Thought

D. All of the above

Most of the above are actions and emotional reactions arising from thoughts but one question is; **"How do | speak to myself?"**

You know, the voice (or voices) inside your head, how does it speak to you? Is it polite, rude, is it male or female, does it change with different situations, is it your voice? It's ok, don't be scared, it is normal, there is even a voice reading these words now, can you hear it reading? Are you reading or listening? Weird isn't it? I can hear my own voice as I write this, naturally. People who know me can hear my voice when they read this too but others will have to create a surrogate voice, hehe!

Your thoughts are being narrated to you by your mind. Often we are having conversations in our mind and sometimes with many people at the same time, how do we do that? It's weird! There is no intention to do it, it is like automatic. We sometimes hear voices or noises that are not audible externally but are only in our mind, I call it delusion (mental garbage) and don't entertain it nor do I follow or analyze it, I drop it, let it go and I am happy to this day. If you listen to it, follow or analyze it, you might make yourself crazy, don't do that, it is not what you want, trust me!

Sometimes you lie to yourself. You also make promises that you can't or don't want to keep and thus you judge, blame, criticize and punish yourself. Be aware of this form of self-suffering. Cut it short with awareness and replace it with wisdom, forgiveness or loving-kindness.

This is your mind, train it to be the best it can be without expectation or limitation.

Now take your first answer to the first question and ask yourself;

HOW WAS MY MIND?

- 1. Greedy / selfish?
- 2. Angry / aversíve?
- 3. Deluded / confused?
- 4. All of the above

Keep it brief and to the point, again, don't go into the story about why, how or when and not trying to defend yourself or justify your choices, that is not important now - just be objective and honest, stay with the facts, maybe you know that it was fear, for example, fear is caused by confusion or delusion, say to yourself; "fear". Just know it at first, it is enough (better than not knowing it!). Or you may inquire deeper into that fear; Why am | afraid of that ? See how far down the "Rabbit Hole" you go!

Continuing with forgiveness, now ask yourself; WASIAWARE? No WASIWISE? Unfortunately not.

AMISORRY? Yes, very!

IFORGIVE MYSELF! How does that feel? Repeat it to yourself a few more times...

MAYIBE FREE FROM SUFFERING!

Please don't expect miracles, miracles usually arise in the absence of expectation. Like most things in life, this will work best if we have faith in it, if we believe in it. However, we can't force ourselves to believe, it must come from experience and from the heart. That's why | try to understand and let go of expectations, consider this just an experiment and remind yourself;

"| don't know what will happen, anything can happen!"

Now | would like to talk about harming oneself. Again, our natural reaction is to resist this, "| don't harm myself, others harm me!" Or we blame it on our circumstances or our family, society or the world in general. No, friend, this is coming from your own individual conditioning not from anyone or anything else external from yourself.

Here we are taking responsibility for our own suffering and not blaming anyone else. We are also not blaming ourselves, this is important. There is no blame, we do things according to our previous experience, from what we have learned, from our limited understanding and due to the present moment circumstances, this is merely cause and effect. Here is one of the foundations for forgiveness, the fact that you didn't know that you were harming yourself. You were on "autopilot", automatically reacting to the way things were, which you didn't understand at the time. This is ignorance, you have it, | have it, we all have it! That's why | am writing this and you are reading it because we are ignorant, if we weren't, we'd be enlightened and there'd be no need for all this teaching and learning and confusing and suffering.

Ignorance

This is the basis for why we harm ourselves. It is not that we want to but it turns out that way. We wouldn't normally think, "I want to harm myself!" "I want to be angry now!" "I want more stress!" The harm, anger, stress, etc, are just the effect of how we have inadvertently programmed ourselves to react to particular situations. That mental state arises due to conditions and then passes away and when it does, it has finished, it doesn't exist anymore and a new emotion or reaction has arisen in this moment, why can't we see, know and understand that?

And why can't we let that go once it has passed?

Why do we repeat, recall and re-experience the suffering? Why are we doing this to ourselves?

We are lacking the wisdom and understanding of impermanence, we fail to fully realize that when something is gone, it is gone, no matter how beautiful, amazing, traumatic, ugly, sad, etc, it was. It seems that we attach to it and relate to it, almost as if we are saying, "That is me!" "| am that!" "That event/person/thing was /is my life!" Then we are blinded by grief, we can't see through it, we don't want to let it go because we think it is "ME" and | don't want to disappear. "| want to be permanent and | want all things to last forever, even the bad stuff!" This is madness, delusion, ignorance and it is the cause of our sufferings again and again and again, around and around... That event, person or thing and associated emotion are gone, you are not that thing nor are you the emotion, they were simply an effect of a cause, none of these are you.

You are not what you think you are.

You think and believe you are this character that you have formed in your mind, playing the lead role in your own movie with all the scenes and dramas too. This only happens IN YOUR MIND, nowhere else, no one knows your story, no one else is watching your movie, not your parents or siblings, not your partner or your children, no one! It is your own imagination! That doesn't mean that those people don't exist or that your body doesn't exist, it does! It doesn't mean that you don't think, because you do! It just means that the YOU that you think you are is not you. You imagine yourself and your role in life but who is it that is doing this imagining? There is the "you" who is the character in your life and there is the story teller the "you" who is imagining, which "you" are you? Are you both, one and the same? Or is there another you, something beyond both of these?

We have the ability to look at our own life and say; "I work there, these are my family, I live here, I have this much money and these are my memories and my dreams for the future." Who is reviewing this? Who is looking at your life in this neat little summarized package that you see it in? Even this is part of the conditioning process, you have somehow

been conditioned to reflect on your life and say; "This is me, this is what | do and where | go, this is my life." That is an effect of previous conditions, you learned to do that. It is hard to step out of this isn't it? This is where meditation comes in. At first, you are the one who is meditating but after some time and practice and experience, you find that there is no "you" meditating, there is only a body with all of its processes, there are 5 physical senses working and there is a mind operating., the sixth sense. The awareness that sees the mind operating is a part of the mind but it is not "you" the personality, it is a process, a function, a condition that has been created from previous conditions. Actually, all of this is so simple that we can't understand it. We have been over-trained and we over analyze and over complicate everything in life, which is unnecessary but that's what we have programmed ourselves to do. So with awareness and wisdom, we may learn how to reprogram ourselves to accept and forgive ourselves first. lt's like nature, a flower doesn't suddenly wake

up one day and say, "Hey! | am a flower! How did that happen?!" Or a dolphin doesn't ask, "Why am | here?" It doesn't need to because the question is defunct, unnecessary, inappropriate, these are human thoughts and questions. Animals and plants don't need to do this because they just are as they are, they follow their instincts and everything is alright, even destruction and death is fine. It is us humans who don't accept the way we are, we keep trying to control and change and force things to be the way that we think they SHOULD BE! But that's what humans do and | accept that now and | forgive myself for my humanness and for going around in circles and harming myself and others, | only did it because | didn't know any better! How can | avoid doing something unless | fully realize its harmfulness? These days | am still making mistakes in my speech, actions and thoughts and cause harm to myself but at least | am seeing the process and understanding how the mind works and learning from every situation as much as possible. When the conditions are right, suffering will end, not before!

LOVE

This is such a huge topic, it's like the meaning of life and | could write a whole book on this topic but | am going to put down my main thoughts and insights thus far and let's see what the future brings.

What is love? Hahahaha! I heard that was the most Googled question in 2011. Haha, isn't it funny how we ask "Google God" our questions now? Before it was the elder of the village or a wise person in your life, now it's the internet - ok that's the way it is now.

Love is an emotion, a mental state or expression, perhaps it is a reaction to conditions based on what has been experienced previously. It is a feeling in the mind and in the body. It is natural, spiritual and ethereal. It is a form of energy, a powerful, universal, boundless, limitless and pure natural energy available to all beings, everyone, everywhere, all the time!

Where does it come from?

I think you know the answer to that! However,

we don't want to believe that answer and we follow our heads instead of our hearts! True love comes from YOUR HEART ONLY. Have you ever heard that before? Did anyone ever tell you that? Maybe they did but it didn't make sense or it didn't mean anything at the time, just another philosophical statement. This means that even what you thought was love from another person ISALSOYOUR OWN LOVE. Yep, love doesn't come from out there, it only ever comes from in here. So you ask, "Why do | feel love when somebody says to me, "| love you"?" When you hear those magic words or you see that twinkle in their eye, you realize that if they love you,

"IMUSTBELOVEABLE!"

The more you respect and love that person, the stronger you feel the love arising in your own heart! If that person is really beautiful , intelligent or famous and they say they love you, oh wow! That love in you is even stronger!

ILOVE YOU are only words! Love is a concept, not JUST a concept, it is

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also an experience but the word is a concept none the less. How does your conditioning react to that? It feels a bit deflated, a bit disappointed, it says, "You mean I have spent my whole life trying to get a concept?" Yep, sorry about that but you could celebrate the fact that now you have woken up to the truth and you can't be tricked by that lie again! There's always a positive side (Thanks Polyanna!).

It's funny isn't it, you could be doing some mundane chore like washing the dirty dishes with your mind lost in the future and some sweet person suddenly comes up to you and says, "I love you!!" And all of a sudden there it is, LOVE, with all its warmth, security and inner fireworks! But just a few seconds ago, you were lost in "La-La Land", then you heard a spoken concept, you remembered how lovely you are and now you are floating in heaven! Do you see how the mind works?

In Love with Love!

This is a great expression, someone told me this a long time ago and it is amazing how true it is. We are not as in love with the person as we are in love with love. It is what that person represents that we love, not so much the person. If another person could express or embody the same love or even more, we could equally love them as we did the first person. If you are in love with someone now, you will reject and resist what I have just explained. If you are heartbroken, you will probably agree with it.

Two Kinds of Love

There is a big difference between loving someone and being IN LOVE with them. We can love anyone with pure, unconditional love, without expectations of anything in return or we can fall in love with them and be blind to the rest of the world. We put so much time and effort into this ONE person, that we are oblivious to other people around us, even ones whom we previously loved, like family and friends.

Have you ever had a BEST friend that you did almost everything with, you were almost inseparable and then you fall in love with someone and you hardly ever see that best friend anymore? That hurts them! Firstly, you have blindness with the friend but then comes the blindness with the lover. Then if the lover doesn't live up to your expectations, you drop them and they are hurt too! Now you are lost and lonely because of your intense blind, selective and exclusive kind of love. All three people are hurt because of love. That's not REAL love!

I feel that the more you love someone, to that very same extent you will suffer when you are separated from them. If you REALLY love someone, you will REALLY suffer when they are gone or that love is lost. So this doesn't mean don't love anyone. It doesn't mean cut people off and live in a bubble or a cave. It doesn't mean to be emotionless or cold and hard towards people, that is an extreme to be avoided just as the exclusive kind of love is harmful and should be avoided. It means to be aware of the kind of love you are experiencing, see and understand if it may be harmful to you or to another or to both and it will naturally transform into universal, unconditional love. This is a miracle how this happens. You don't have to do anything, it is only a matter of *fully realizing* that worldly, conditional, subjective and exclusive kind of love is harmful, then it will naturally evolve into harmless, and congenial, freestyle love. This is so liberating and refreshing, you can love anyone but without attachment and expectation. This concept of open and free love is quite foreign to most people and it is misunderstood and therefore not trusted until of course it is practiced and experienced, then you would never live or love another way again.

SELFLOVE

This is the only true love that you will ever know in this lifetime. A fervent religious person reading this might challenge; "What about God's love?" That's ok, we are talking about the same thing. How can we feel God's love but through our own heart? It doesn't matter whether you call it God's love or your own love, the fact remains that YOU are the one who is experiencing it in

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YOUR heart, nice huh? If you believe this, then God is in your heart, always was and always will be! Knowing this, we need not search for God or love out there... That's why I say, there's nowhere to go and nothing to do! Because it is all right here, right now! Everything you need is in THIS MOMENT, not in the past and not in the future, here and now... Relax and enjoy the ride!

Another miracle is that you are the source of love to your perceived world. All the people you know can benefit from your own self love. When they see how you love yourself, they will understand that they can too, it will be a natural and effortless sharing. This also means that you don't have to try too hard to share your love, just embody love, be love, eat, breathe, speak, act and think love, naturally without force or effort... be yourself and the universal love will flow freely from your heart.

So we won't find love out there in the world, it was never out there. We need to relax and look inwardly and see what is blocking our own pure love from arising from it's source, the heart.

Why Can't | Love Myself?

That's the question. What are the answers? Try writing your answers down, yes, you might feel a bit disappointed with yourself at first because you are looking at your own negativities but this is the beginning of leaving those useless mental states behind forever. You have to see what's blocking you before you can understand it and move forward and beyond it. Some things you write down may include; **self doubt**

angry with / hate myself

thinking | am bad

unworthiness

confused / lost

I don't know how to love myself

don't know what love is

fear (of what?)

failing to see my own beauty (external and internal)

The list goes on... Just write down anything that naturally arises in your mind, don't think about it too much, don't analyze it, just write it! You have to see what is in your own heart, most people never do this for their whole life and they live and eventually die in confusion and darkness. This exercise is highlighting the nature of the heart, its states and moods.

Most of these answers have their associated memories and stories and you can see for yourself that we can't go into each story and analyze and fix it. That is how most people in the world try to solve their problems, that is not what this practice is about, this is a different and unusual approach. Here we are being objective, seeing only impersonal mental states and processes and understanding how the mind really works both scientifically and practically. We are not being subjective and taking the emotions and stories personally and trying to work them out in detail, that's what got us into this mess in the first place, thinking too much! No more over complicating and personalizing each event, emotion and story, that is endless and it makes us stressed, tired, frustrated and disappointed.

That list is only for your awareness, you don't have to do anything about those mental states,

however for those of you who *need* something to do, here are a few objective views you may look at the processes on that list with.

Objective Forgiveness Reminders

There are a few simple tips that help in our objective forgiveness practice, like wisely reminding yourself;

* That event/emotion is not happening now, it was impermanent, it has passed. It didn't last, it is finished, lost in history so no need to dredge it up again and again to cause my own distress and suffering. It has passed. I forgive myself!

> * That was suffering, | don't want to repeat it! | forgive myself!

* That happened due to causes and conditions, that's all. | didn't do it intentionally, if | knew it would turn out like this | would not have done it, it is as simple as that! | forgive myself!

*That was who | was, not who | am and not who | will be! | am changing...

| forgive myself!

MANTRA

You may even like to use any of these reminders as a mantra. Whenever you find yourself (awareness) going over the same old story with the same old reactions, just repeat to yourself;

"That was who | was, not who | am and not who | will be!"

That's wisdom! And repeat it as many times as you like, not with anger, not to kill or drown out the story but gently, assertively and persistently until that thought fades and the mantra becomes strong, then continue with whatever you were doing. Repeat as many times as is necessary or until it is no longer needed. You may also change the mantra to another sentence if you wish, adjusting it to your own feeling or need. Repeating a mantra is a formal type of meditation or mind training, use it with confidence but remember it is a means to an end and not an end in itself. At some point we drop the mantra and use pure awareness and wisdom, bare attention, just knowing and trusting. As | am suggesting here, it is not a serious meditation instruction, just using a mantra as a reminder for daily life and allowing it to arise naturally anytime.

The Big Picture

Another way to explain this way of forgiveness is that we are looking at "The Big Picture". Usually we are trying to look at all the details and individual stories and their characters and solve all the problems and this is gonna take forever!! That's the "líttle pícture" or countless líttle pictures. The big picture is the overall outcome of all of our stories and associated worries, fear, stress, anger, etc. They all lead to discontentment or basically, unhappiness and this is not what you want, right? So we really need to see, know and understand that the past has gone, that it is suffering, it is all only cause and effect and those memories are not me, this is me here and now, fresh and new! Even as you are reading this, your mind is changing so fast that you cannot see it ...

The mind is faster than anything else, even light!

So the mind is never the same from one moment to the next, it always has been this way and always will be. That's funny, that truth doesn't change but the concept or subject, in this case, the mind, changes extremely fast. Truth remains constant throughout the ages but concepts change, they are unstable, vulnerable and insecure. Truth is unshakeable, firm and reliable. That is why you must find your own truth.

We all have our own truth. You can't find Christ's Truth or Buddha's Truth or your teacher's truth or the "truth" that you read or downloaded from the internet. You must find your own unique and individual experience of universal truth that has been realized by sages and wise people throughout history. We all have access to pure truth in EVERY MOMENT if we are awake and open to it.

Self Love - continued

ls not selfish, it would appear so from the outside or from people who have not yet understood it, which is very common. You see in our society, we are told not to love ourselves! To love yourself is to have a big ego and to exclude loving others. So we are taught to "Love thy neighbor." That is wonderful but only if it is done sincerely with your heart not just because you were told to. Let's face it, these days for most of us living in a big city, we don't even know who our neighbors are! | believe that if you really can love yourself, then you love everyone who is a part of the story of you. How could you not love them, if they are a part of you? You may not agree with their lifestyle or life decisions but you can accept and respect them as they are because now you can accept and respect yourself as you are with all of your faults and your past mistakes and defects. You forgive yourself for not being perfect and therefore you naturally forgive everyone else too because they are the same as you, they are a part of you, some may even

say, THEY ARE YOU! We are all one in spirit or consciousness. Spirit doesn't differentiate between skin color, location, size, beauty, financial or social status, mental state or attitude or even religious persuasion, etc. Spirit or consciousness is the pure energy of the mind and therefore of our life and of ALL life and it is always present, it is already forgiving, accepting and it is pure unconditional love, here and now. Stop and feel it... Love yourself, love life!

So there are two main kinds of love, there is the "sticky-gooey" worldly love based on attachment, selfishness and expectations, which most of us have experienced and take to be normal and the only kind of love. This kind of love is conditional, it's like a deal, "If you love me, I will love you, if you don't love me, I won't love you!" It is what almost all of the love songs and romantic movies are based on, it is very lovely and makes for good stories, (and makes a lot of money!) it may include pure love but it is not pure love.

Unfortunately, we **expect** others to love us, whether we love them or not. Parents expect their children to love and respect them and children expect the same from parents. In a relationship, this expectation is very strong and so we put pressure on that person to love us. Again, this is normal and it seems that not many people know it or are aware of it but it is like extortion! And both sides are expecting the same thing, so it becomes a competition, a game or a battle! They say, "| love you so much, | do so much for you but what do | get in return?!" "You should do this or that and show me how much you love me!" Well, maybe they don't love you! Are you being honest with yourself about that? Are you trying to hold on to the last little threads of what used to be beautiful but has now fallen apart? Wake up to the truth, see that your romantic fantasy has passed, also don't put up with abusive or negative behavior, you are allowed to walk away for the sake of your own happiness and everyone around you. Too many people stay in uncomfortable or even abusive relationships trying

to hold on to a dream, wake up! **Do you love yourself**? If not, how can you expect others to love you? If yes, then there never was a problem, only a romantic fantasy that has passed, time to move on, Sunshine!

I realized a long time ago, that pure love is very closely related to **respect**, in fact, they may be the same thing! When we have a healthy respect for someone or something, there is a kind of love present, an affinity, a connection with that person or thing. We feel it as a part of ourselves, we don't feel separate, this is a lovely feeling. This **"respect-love"** is effortless, we don't have to try to do it, it just comes naturally, it flows from the heart and is very liberating. If you are forcing yourself to love someone or something, then it is not love.

Respecting yourself means taking care of the body with good diet and exercise, also being gentle with yourself in the mind, accepting your so called faults, which are just natural effects of past conditioning. Again, this takes awareness and wisdom, self love and peace are the result.

Relationships

True love is based on truth, your truth! Everything and everyone changes, therefore WORLDLY LOVE CHANGES, it is not forever! Pure love as a universal unconditional truth is forever but the love two people think they share is not. People usually don't understand this because it goes against what they WANT to believe. If a beautiful person wakes up with you this morning and you smile and look into each others eyes and you feel your own love and they feel theirs, we can say you feel love together. But then you go to the toilet to defecate and you are worried about the meeting with the boss later today... NOW WHERE IS THAT LOVE? It's gone Baby! 100% dissolved into thought, fear, projection, worry, etc. Can you see that the love has gone, never to be experienced again? Then you finish your "business" and flush the toilet, exit the bathroom and you see those beautiful eyes sparkling in the morning light and there is the love back again! But not the same love, it is a new one! Then the phone rings... and the love

is lost again. This is far too realistic for those romantics who want to believe that love is permanent and that your lover loves you ALL THE TIME, ha! That's a lovely thought, no wonder people are so distressed and disappointed when they find out that their lover doesn't love them anymore. What were you expecting, permanent love?? Wake up! This doesn't mean that you can't or shouldn't love someone and it doesn't mean you have to change your lover each new day. Just be realistic and know when love is present and when it is not. Watch it come and watch it go, watch it arise and pass away and remind yourself;

LOVE IS TEMPORARY!

Be honest with yourself, are you really in love with the person when you are having sex with them or are you just in love with the feelings of sex? Are you experiencing lust or is it love? Sex is addictive and when one is at the height of sexual pleasure, usually they are not thinking about how much they love the person, they are absorbed and lost in their own physical and sensual pleasure, it's natural. Do you love the person OR what that person represents? Security, money, status, fun?

Can you love someone even if they love someone else?

Can we love more than one person? If not, why not? Who makes up the rules, you? Them? Us?

Can you make love to someone even after they made love to another? What is the difference to you? It is all concept. Whatever someone does with you is completely unique, no one else can do what they do, it may seem the same but it is not. Every person loves you in a completely different way. | am not supporting multiple partners or free sex,] am just offering you points for contemplation. The most important thing between two people is open and honest communication, which is often the most difficult thing because we don't want to hurt their feelings or we don't want to lose them. Partners should talk about everything together, like what you want, how you feel and encourage them to share too. I think if you are not communicating, then it is not a real relationship and maybe not real love.

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Just because someone loves you today it doesn't mean that they are obliged to love you tomorrow, they might change their mind. They might leave you or get sick or forget who you are or love someone else or they might even die. Come back to the only true love you can rely on, **self love or universal unconditional love.** It will never let you down and it is always present, always available.

Of course we can love someone when they are not present with us here and now but we have to understand that it is conceptual. Oh, the person is real but you have no idea what they are doing, who they are with or are they still alive or not? Someone could walk away from you and drop dead at anytime, thus is the vulnerability of human life. People are most distraught when this happens but what did you expect? Immortality? Did you expect that this person is in your life for YOUR BENEFIT? To make YOU happy? That's a bit selfish isn't it? Do you think people are here for your entertainment and pleasure? We call them, "MY boyfriend", "MY daughter", they are no more yours

than the wind and the stars! Imagine if you live with the concept that when this person walks out that door, I may never see them again, how would you treat them? With forgiveness, acceptance, kindness, love and respect, of course. How do you treat the people YOU love? Usually with contempt, taking them for granted and expecting them to always be here for you and to speak, act and think the way YOU want them to! The younger generation are like that with their parents. It doesn't lead to peace and harmony within oneself, within the family or in the world. Try to see this within yourself.

Often it is only when someone dies that we wish we had loved and respected them more but it's too late. Love yourself and love them, NOW!

So we may wish for ourselves first; May | be safe, peaceful and healthy!

Feel it, then wish;

Wherever they may be, may they be safe, peaceful and healthy!

And you might like to add; Whoever they are with, whatever they are doing, may they be safe, peaceful and healthy!

This is pure, unconditional love. Love without expectation of anything in return. You genuinely care for them whether they are with you or not. This wish is universal, all beings want the same. No one wishes for the opposite, to be in fear or danger, to be stressed or agitated and to be sick or weak. Everyone wants to be free from danger and safe in body and mind, problem-free and peaceful in their heart and healthy and strong in their body. So it is quite an holistic wish for yourself, for others and everyone in this world and in fact for all beings in all forms of existence and in all directions!

May all beings in all directions be safe, peaceful and healthy!

"Nobody Loves Me!"

Have you ever thought this to yourself? Some people even say it out loud, how sad! Many of us are totally dependent upon others to love us, ignorant of the fact that true and pure love is already within us in every moment. Whether we feel love or not is closely related to whether we are happy and contented or not. Perhaps that's what makes us truly happy, true love? When we feel pure universal love within us, we feel complete, we don't need or want anything or anyone, there is contentment in the heart and we feel rich, very much alive and fulfilled! Satisfaction can dispel suffering. Even though there may be some pain in the body and your environment turbulent, the pure energy of love is still flowing and when we remind ourselves of that fact and we repeatedly reconnect with that truth, we feel at home everywhere, no fear or worry, just peace and security within! That's what you want, isn't it?

So next time you hear yourself say, "Nobody loves me!" just remind yourself, that is just a concept, another story made up by the ego to feel sorry for itself and get more attention or love. It is negative unnecessary and childish! Even you may ask yourself; **"Is that true?"** If it is true then there's a good reason to love yourself!!

Remind yourself;

Love is always present,

love is universal,

love has no owner,

love comes and goes,

IAMLOVE!

It seems that everyone, ever since humans were invented, is looking for love. First of all, you can't find something that you never lost and you have had all along. Secondly, the best way to "find" it is to stop looking for it. Also, you can't get more of it, it is already in saturated abundance, here and now... How much do you want, Mr. Greedy?

SELFHATRED

This is such an amazing phenomenon, some people can't even imagine what self hatred means while others live their whole life with nothing else.] was out in the surf the other day enjoying catching waves and chatting with some of the others out there. There was one guy, grumbling about the conditions (] was loving them!) and a girl took a wave he wanted and he abused her with foul language and she was visibly upset because she didn't mean to do it, she didn't see him. | said to her; "Don't worry, he was angry a long time before he met you!" And he was. All of his complaining about the conditions and other people was him hating himself but attempting to blame it on others and the environment, it is very sad. Normally, our natural reaction to those people is to get angry back at them but of course that doesn't help anyone. The best we can do when we meet them is to try not to react and definitely don't correct or "help" them but to look within ourselves and see if we have those tendencies and all too often we will find some of their behavior within us.

They become our teachers and so we silently thank them, we bow to them and we forgive them for they too are merely products of their own conditioning. We may also feel compassion for them and wish them to be free from suffering in their own mind.

How do you feel about the following words? Your mind is a prison!

Any reaction from your heart?

Any opposition or resistance?

Wouldn't you hate to be in prison? This is also why some people hate themselves because they feel trapped in their own mind, in their own concepts and their own story and | guess they are. If you believe you are a "me" and an "|", then you are trapped in that "me" and that "|", you have to be the actor in that story, you have to play that role whether you like it or not! Then people want to escape this prison, they want to escape their own mind and it may lead the more hopeless ones to suicide, thinking that there is no other way out.

The way "out" is to wake up and realize that you were never "in"! If there is no "in", then there is no "out"! So simple! What a relief!

What this means is that each one of us lives in our own story and no two stories can merge into one, so we feel lonely, confused and angry, especially with ourselves because we blame ourselves for causing ourselves and others' suffering. Some people, it seems, blame themselves for everything. It seems we can't escape ourselves, we have to be who we are and many people can't accept who they are, they want to be someone else and they feel stuck and trapped. There's good news! Every moment is a new moment, every thought has never been thought before by you, every word you speak, every action you do is new.

SO YOU ARE NOT STUCK AND NEVER HAVE BEEN! IT IS IMPOSSIBLE!

And the "you" who thought you were stuck has just changed into a new you! And now another you, you are not the same you from moment to moment! Realize this and you will never be depressed or there will be no need to hate yourself, which "you" do you hate? The one that just dissolved? Or the one from one minute ago? Or one day, one week, one month, one year, ten years ago? There is no permanent, unchanging you, only a constantly changing flow of experiences, thoughts, emotions, reactions and energy.

Self hatred makes the whole world look dark, have you noticed? When we are angry, our world closes in and we can only see the little picture of what we are angry about. We become absorbed in our own story and we can't see anyone else's point of view. It is hard to talk to someone when they are like that, it is like you are only talking to the anger, not the person. I say that about alcohol it is like you are talking to alcohol, not that person because when they are sober, they act and speak quite differently. Dementia is the same, you are talking to the dementia, it is as if the person themselves have vacated and been possessed by senseless state of mind. It is sad and difficult for loved ones to witness this mental disease. All you can do is agree with them and help them to be calm, comfortable and enjoy their moments...

Anger often arises due to having lost control. Ego loves to control and when it feels it can't control a person or a thing, it feels anxious, frustrated, impatient and angry. Perhaps the people who hate themselves are actually seeing the truth within themselves that they ultimately have no control, the mind is only acting and reacting to causes and conditions but they don't understand it, they think the cause is other people and circumstances outside of themselves. What a shame! What a waste of energy but on the other hand, perhaps they have to go through this lesson in order to come to realize the truth and gain an appreciation of all the beautiful things in their life and the people they know and the blessing that this life really is.

We all have to go through a certain degree of suffering in order to realize the truth. In fact, I think that is what this human realm is for, learning about suffering, the cause of suffering, the fact that we can be free from suffering and the way to become free from suffering. Without suffering how could we become free from it?

Happiness, satisfaction, comfort, pleasure and freedom would be meaningless if we had them all the time with nothing to compare them to.

That is an important point to contemplate; if there were no negativities in the world, then there would be nothing to complain about, everything would be positive and satisfactory, then what? Actually, it would be like a heaven realm but it's not, this is the human realm where we must experience both **yin and yang**, the positive and negative, pain and pleasure, the light and dark, suffering and satisfaction. This world is not out of balance and it is not re-balancing itself. Everything in this world, including our body and mind is already in balance, we are just unaware of it... and | don't have to do a thing! Actually, | can't do anything about it, except watch and learn, that's all.

> Relax, | am always in the right place at the right time to learn the right lesson for my right understanding, TRUST!

Stop reading now, go for a walk and keep in mind the last point... Come back to this later.

Self Hatred - continued

Although self hatred is anger, | think it is based in delusion. | think we don't even know what we are really angry about. We think it is the outside world but it isn't. Then we need to ask ourselves each question below, one at a time, deeply and find an answer;

What am | angry about, REALLY? Why am | angry, internally? When did | start to hate myself? Why? What do | REALLY want?

You could write these questions and their answers down. Do one question at a time and maybe stay with it for a few days or a week, take it as a theme for reflection. Write down ANY answer that comes to mind, don't rationalize it, don't justify it, just write down anything that pops up in your mind. Then read them again and see which ones are most true and then pay more attention to them in your daily life. Don't blame yourself for thinking this way, it is just old programming but do see how destructive it can be within yourself and the mind will naturally start to feel compassion for itself and will slowly (or quickly) let those old programs fall away and then upload some forgiveness, appreciation, gratitude, loving-kindness or compassion, if they haven't spontaneously arisen anyway.

PERFECTIONISM

This is another topic that once | start on it, | can go on for days but fortunately | am lazy to write as much as | think, so | will spare you the boring and tedious task of reading all my ramblings!

| was amazed when | found this perfectionism within myself. | realized | was a frustrated perfectionist because | never perfected anything in my life. | always wanted everything and everyone and myself to be perfect but it never has been. | noticed a program that was running for how long? | don't know, as long as | can remember. | always wanted everything to be in perfect balance and symmetry. |t was whenever | was in a room, like someone's family room, my mind would straighten up anything that was crooked or out of order, like a picture frame or a tablecloth or furniture. | consider myself very fortunate that | discovered this and am able to see through it to the extent that | feel more at ease with the way this mind is conditioned, it is not "me", it is just conditioning. Now | can accept the way of this body too and other people and the world the way it is. |t is such a relief!

Perfectionism is one of the major causes of self suffering! This world is not perfect, that is one of it's characteristics however, if the whole world and all things and all beings in it are imperfect, then that is perfect! Hahaha!

PERFECTLY IMPERFECT!

You see, our ego, due to ignorance, is not happy with the way things are, that is, both pleasant and unpleasant. Due to constant desire it wants only pleasant and tries to correct everything unpleasant and make it pleasant. Similarly, it rejects anything unpleasant as if it has no place in this world, as if it shouldn't be here. That word "shouldn't" and it's big brother, "should" are big trouble makers in our lives too! When they are present, there is a resistance to reality.

In reality, in truth, there are no "shoulds" and "shouldn'ts" there are only IS and ARE.

Things are the way they are, that's all! It is useless to say, the world shouldn't be polluted, or people should behave themselves or there shouldn't be any poverty or diseases or any of the other things "wrong" with the world. Sorry friends, this is the way it is, that's all. Oh we can work towards change and help make the world a "better" place, we all "should" do that together but the reality is, some people care and some don't, some help and others hinder. The main thing is that you follow your heart and do whatever you feel is right, beneficial and useful for yourself and the whole world.

This human realm is one of balance, positives and negatives, Yin and Yang, light and dark, good and bad, etc. It has always been this way. Before you were born it was like this, now it is like this and it will be like this after you die, so what are you going to do about it? Change the world or change yourself? | have bad news about both of these options! The first one can only really happen if we do the second one and the second one is not a matter of personal choice, yes that's right, you have no choice. There is no "you" as such, so how are you going to change anything?

Impersonal Nature of Life, NO YOU!

There is an impersonal system operating this life and it has nothing to do with your little ego. You probably have never been told this before and even if you did, you wouldn't have believed it and you probably don't now. It doesn't matter, I will attempt to explain it anyway.

I wrote, there is no you and all things operate in this realm due to natural system of cause and effect, not by personal choice. People call it God, others call it fate or destiny, karma, spirit or consciousness, they may even call it nature or energy, it doesn't matter what you call it, it also is

not a being, not an entity, nor is it a personality, there is no one-being controlling all other beings and all things, it doesn't make sense. If you sit still for the whole day and do absolutely nothing, everything in this universe changes without your intention. The grass grows, the children play, your food digests and your heart beats, your breath breathes by itself and your mind works, thoughts come and go, emotions and sleepiness and desire, boredom, concentration and a whole range of experiences but "you" do nothing! So "who" is "doing" all of these things? Or perhaps a better question is WHAT is happening? That makes more sense. Whatever just happened a second ago has caused this to happen now, can you see that? The last moment of experience has caused this moment, that's all. It is too simple isn't it? It is so simple that we can't understand it! It is funny but we have so over-thought, over analyzed and over complicated everything in life that we can't see the simple truth and reality of how life works here and now. The truth is cause and effect, a natural law

which has no owner. No one, no race or religion have a monopoly over the truth, it is universal and affects all of us in the same way but we all have our own unique and individual experiences of the truth in every new moment.

I think we all know the truth deep down inside us but we need someone or something to spell it out to us, and that is my point, now that you have read what I have written here, your view and your mind have changed, whether you believe it or not, whether you like it or not. Now it is not you who changed it, it is the fact that due to prior conditions and conditioning, you are reading this and now there is an effect. This is really hard to imagine, that "]" don't exist as such. This body is here and now, for sure and this mind is working now for sure but what am]?

Am | the body or the mind or both or neither? |s it possible that | am neither? Then what am |? | am spirit, energy, flow, nature, God, LOVE, consciousness, this! What is the energy behind what you are doing now? Does it come from your breakfast/food? If so, then where does food get its energy from?

Food is energy, all physical things are forms of energy, even air, light, heat and space are energy. Ok, then what is the energy behind your mind?

It is mental energy, not physical, it doesn't come from food or the physical world alone. What or where is the source of mental or spiritual energy?

Nice question, huh? Personally, | don't know, maybe there is no answer, some questions are answerless or no answer is the answer. The truth is that | can feel it, there is a "silent buzz" or "hum" that flows through every experience, just as electricity makes the TV come "alive" or lighting up a room at night or it's like sunshine and light that keeps the world alive. It is like this law of cause and effect that is behind every event, yet unseen and mostly unrecognized.

The loooong point | am making here is that perfectionism in ultimate truth is just a concept,

however we don't understand the truth of our own existence and the world and therefore we take things personally and feel we have the power or the responsibility to change things and correct them and make them the way that we think they should be. This is stressful, tiring, frustrating, etc, however there is some good that comes of it. We become disillusioned with the world, we work so hard to help everyone and help the planet but still just as we think we are on top of it, another thing comes along to stuff it up. That's the human world. So this leads us to give up, to let go, to relinquish and surrender to the powers that be, the way things are. Let's face it, either you do that now or on your deathbed, if you are alert enough or if you have enough time. | visit my mum in a nursing home and | realized that every single resident there, young or old has had to surrender to life and sooner or later will have to surrender to death. They haven't given up life, they have given up struggling with it. They have let go and now they go with the flow, at least many of them. You can clearly see the ones who have not and how

they still inadvertently create suffering for themselves and others around them by complaining, bitching and worrying.

It is interesting to see those old folks talking about the state of the world and complaining about it but there is absolutely NOTHING they can do about it. We are programmed to resist, to struggle to complain and worry. What a shame, when we could be relaxed, peaceful, joyful, loving, funny, compassionate and caring etc.

Here, surrendering and giving up don't mean to do nothing. It doesn't mean to not do good in the world, all it simply means is that you don't need to stress and struggle to achieve what you want in this life. I know you have been taught differently, I was too but I realized that I can perform a task with stress, fear and worry or I can do it relaxed, calm and peaceful and get the same result. We are often using unnecessary force and too much effort to achieve something that is already flowing, we just need to learn how to identify the natural flow within any thing or task and connect with it and surf with it. If it is a struggle, it is showing you that there is something "wrong", there is resistance. Resistance is not bad or wrong, it is a sign, it is normal and natural but often unnecessary. Basically, we try too hard. You can test this out and see for yourself. Do | try too hard? In what? Where? When?

Hopefully these words may be a catalyst for change in your mind and you too may learn to see how nature operates through your every action, speech and thought and you may effortlessly surrender to nature and her perfect ways. This can reduce stress and create acceptance and peace.

Did you ever meet anyone who was perfect? Has there ever been a perfect human being? If so, what made them perfect and does *everyone* agree that they were perfect or only certain people? I think that if I am not perfect, people are not perfect and the world is not perfect then why are we expecting perfection? Is it taught to us? Is our society on the "perfection train" and we are all deluded by the same elusive dream? Well, thankfully not all of us, some of us have woken up to the "perfectionist delusion" and let it slide and accepted the imperfections of the world, other people, this body and mind, phew! What a relief! Remember this little reminder mantra;

The world and everyone and everything in it, is PERFECTLY IMPERFECT!

With high expectations you will suffer high disappointment, with simple expectations, life is easier and contentment is a part of everyday life.

Don't confuse this with having no dreams or ambitions or making future plans! That is not what | am saying at all!

You can dream and plan and have goals as much as you like but don't rely on them because anything can happen. The world, your body and mind are constantly changing and all conditions are changeable, remember that. Make a plan and put it into action but remind yourself; "This is an experiment, I don't know how it will go, I will do my best and let go of the rest!"

On the other hand, to live a spontaneous life, without planning is really an amazing experiment too! People say; "Oh, I just live from day to day!" But I think they don't really understand the full meaning of that, without expectation for tomorrow. It's a lovely idea but if you really live that way, everything that happens is a surprise! Without expectations, miracles happen on a daily basis! Relinquishing personal desires to the universal flow sends you on a journey down the rapids of life that leaves you transformed, open and as light as light itself! What do you want?

Back to perfectionism. | realized a long time ago, that there is like a "perfect me" living inside my mind. He walks, talks, sits, acts, looks and sounds perfect. | partly came to this realization by observing women and how they are often looking at their reflection in shop windows, car windows, mirrors or anything reflective like even mobile phone screens. In their mind, they want to be or think they already are beautiful and have to maintain this image. It is like they have a Barbie Doll image of themselves in their mind but then are constantly complaining and frustrated with their reality. This is self created and perpetuated suffering and it is really unnecessary.

If you can see through and let go of this perfect standard that you place on your body, mind, family, friends, people and the way the world is, then not only do you release yourself from suffering but you also release them, all beings and everything from your expectations of perfection!

It's funny but perfectionism itself can also be seen as an imperfection! Do you get that? A "perfect" mind would not have perfectionist expectations, it would be free and open, ready for anything because anything is possible. Forgive your mind, it's not your fault, it is just the result of past conditions and experiences, that's all.

Ambition

We may still work towards improving ourselves, the environment and the world at large, however we must also bare in mind that it is not "me" who does it but merely processes, it is fun to watch! With lowered or removed expectations, life seems so beautiful! Work becomes a joy, commuting to work is like going on a holiday everyday, even a work day becomes an adventure! With the right information, the attitude changes, the mind changes and then your whole world changes! You may find that your ambitions change too. Look at some of the rich people, they decide to give away their money because they realize that it is not happiness. In fact, simple things seem to bring the most joy. In this modern competitive society, we feel pressure to have goals and ambitions, well, | don't and | am happy about that. My goal back in the early 90's was to be a good person, that's all! | am getting there, slowly, still not perfect, hahaha! | also used to want to be a teacher but | found that | expected "students" to have the same enthusiasm and get the

same results as me and that was a failure. Now | just let people be as they are, so what if they don't want to accept my advice? That has nothing to do with me, | know it works for me, that's all. Even if | am the only person in the world who believes and practices forgiveness, it doesn't matter because | know it is good and it feels right for me!

People everywhere have delusions of grandure. They are so busy dreaming about the future that they are not living now. They work hard to save money so they can relax in the future. | relax now and let the future take care of itself. I trust that will have what | need and if | don't, then | don't really need it anyway, nice. Simplicity for me is an elixir of life. People often say they like the way | write and speak too, that's because it is simple and everyone can understand, it is too easy to help people. Actually, | simplify things for myself and so | know others will appreciate that too. I think that is why we love to be in nature, it too is simple, uncomplicated. | usually recommend people to touch nature every day in some way or another, even if it is

only looking at the clouds in the sky or sitting in a garden, feeling the wind or water or the earth but doing so with conscious awareness, knowing your senses are working and really BEING ONE WITH NATURE in this moment. Breathing in and out with full awareness is also a part of nature, feel it anytime you like, WHEREVER YOU ARE, inside or outside. Nature doesn't argue with you, its not full of stories and concepts, it just is and so are we. We love nature because we are also nature, we love beauty because we too are beautiful, we love peace because we are peaceful and the love is there because we are love too, all of these are the nature of us and the universe together as one. We have never been separated from the universe, we have always been one with it. It is only our thoughts that tend to give the illusion of separation.

Thankfully, there is nothing to perfect, everything is the way it is and if your little ego doesn't like it then it can struggle and fight and get stressed, afraid and worry and die that way, and that is "perfect" for you. We live in an "ocean" of possibilities, it is up to your conditioning whether you explore and utilize them or not.

Follow your flow Bro'!

Attitude

Whatever is happening in your life is happening for a reason. You don't need to know the reason, that will drive you crazy trying to analyze everything that happens, just know that you are part of a great force that has been in motion since the beginning of time and will continue indefinitely and all you can do is sit back, be aware, learn your lessons and enjoy the ride. If we have the attitude that this is just another lesson, then you know it will pass and it is for your ultimate betterment. Normally, we resist and make things worse, look back on your life and see all the trouble you caused yourself and others because you could not accept, your body and mind or others or the way of the world, you have been almost always resisting and it hurts and it's tiring.

When things seem to go "wrong", you are probably resisting change. It is a time of transition for you and you need to stay alert, learn this lesson and watch it pass. This is the getting of wisdom and it is not you who is doing it. Have you noticed that truly wise people are not proud of their wisdom, they see it as cause and effect, they see that it was not them who made themselves wise but merely circumstances and conditions. Basically anyone who is bragging about their own wisdom is not truly wise. With wisdom, we remind ourselves that troubles or difficulties, problems are just a transitional phase in our life and there's no need to fight it, just go with the flow, trust the universe. This is the part where | lose people, they like all the other stuff | talk about but when | say, trust, surrender, accept and let go, their little ego JUMPS UP and starts fighting again. Forgive yourself for this "kneejerk" reaction because it is the way we have been "trained", it's our social behavior and the way almost everyone deals with problems in their life. Just for a change, try watching it go ...

Resistance can also be a great thing, look at Nelson Mandela, Gandhi and Martin Luther King and so many more in the history of the world. Resistance with awareness and wisdom will be patient, tolerant, non-violent, peaceful and effective. It doesn't need to be a "struggle" as such. If you truly love or believe in something it is never felt as a struggle, it just is and you do what you have to do. So rather than struggle with your problems or the state of your mind, stop, feel it, watch and learn what it is and why it is there, use your own intrinsic wisdom and be patient, you will find the lesson worthwhile and it will provide you with a more balanced future.

"My Rules"

Have you noticed that you have your own "rules" about how the world is supposed to be? We have little rules about almost everything, even down to the way we wipe are anus with toilet paper! It must be done a particular way, your own special and unique way. Did you know that everyone does that a different way? So there are no rules about it! Try

doing it a different way and see how your mind reacts! It may reject or resist the new way, ok, so try another way! | could have used any example (but | like to add a bit of shock value), like brushing your teeth, slicing vegetables, driving a car, meditating, shopping, eating and the list goes on, almost everything has to be done YOUR WAY! That's why living with others can be so frustrating but also living with yourself can be too! |sn't it funny, if the mind was ours to make it the way we want it to be, then why isn't it?? We have had our whole life to "perfect" it, so why isn't it perfect? BECAUSE IT IS NOT YO(JRS!! |t never was and never will be!

This is why people come to meditate because they don't like the way their mind is, right? If they could accept their mind as it is and the way other people's minds are and the way the world is, then there would be no need to change anything, no need to meditate, simple. "BUT" (and there is always a BIG BUTT when the ego is resisting)... There are not buts! That was the truth and that is all there

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is too it, accept it and the mind will naturally rearrange your so-called "rules of life". This acceptance of all things, beginning with oneself is also forgiveness. So until then you will just have to put up with the suffering that comes along with perpetual resistance, sorry about that! Forgive yourself for being ignorant, again!

First of all you have to be aware of and admit to yourself that you have your own rules for just about everything. Then try loosening, your rules or even bending them or occasionally breaking them and watch how the mind reacts. Be careful, I am not suggesting that you do anything harmful, neither to yourself nor any living beings but challenge your rules about your daily routine, do something different, stop following your own self imposed boundaries, you are a child of the universe!

BOUNDARIES ARE JUST CONCEPTS, IN REALITY, THERE ARE NO BOUNDARIES

We also have values and standards, levels and grades, evaluations and examinations. It seems for some of us that life is like a big test and there is only pass or fail! And all of us don't want to fail! Failure is terrible for the ego, it hates to fail or to be seen as a failure. It always wants to be the winner, the best! This is so boring and childish, when will we ever grow out of these silly habits of the mind? It is ok to have standards and to try to improve oneself, don't worry about that but on the other hand you can drive yourself nuts trying to perfect every task you perform and every word you speak or write! Take it easy, make a few mistakes, you won't be crucified! It is not life or death! Try an experiment which doesn't involve anyone else, just yourself. Why not practice being below your own standards for a change and see how the mind reacts. Do something messy or unfinished, leave some work undone, wear your clothes un-ironed or mismatched and see what happens... My bet is that nothing happens and probably no one notices. | used to think that as a "teacher", | had to have short hair but | really like

long hair, so | grew it long and guess what? Nothing happened! | used to think that | had to speak perfect Burmese or Thai but | don't and guess what? Nothing happens! People forgive me for my lazy language and so | forgive myself. | still do my best but | let go of the rest! Aaaah, now | can just enjoy speaking another language without worrying whether | speak it perfectly or not. Wooo hooo! Try lowering your standards just one notch and enjoy the freedom! Then try lowering your standards for others and set them free from your judgments too! **May we all be free!**

Passive, Assertive and Aggressive

These three are ways in which we deal with any situation in life, they are automated and conditioned responses. Many of us are generally aggressive but then some of us are too passive, some assertive and we all have these three ways within us. These are human traits, normal characteristics for human beings. Which type are you, generally?

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If we are too passive then people can walk all over us and we may feel suppressed and trapped, mistreated and abused. If we are aggressive, we are walking over others and it only causes others to respond with aggression too and continues a vicious cycle of aggression. It also creates feelings of guilt and regret later on. To be assertive, I feel is the balanced, middle way to live as best we can. Neither passive nor aggressive but remaining firm, standing up for yourself and not forcing others. This creates a strong mind, ready for any situation in life.

We don't have to fight for what we want nor by being too passive and doing nothing. We need balanced, continuous and steady effort with firm commitment and faith in oneself and TRUST that what you are doing now is for the right reason.

CONTROL

All egos thrive on control, they love it, they feed on it and it can become excessive and aggressive. This is one of the major causes of our suffering. Why? Because when we are in a

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controlling state of mind, which means trying to make anything or anyone the way that we want it to be, we are struggling, forcing, going against the natural flow of things and this resistance causes stress. You don't have to work in a high powered position in a high powered company to be stressed, it is a Karmic thing, it is a personal thing, it is the way you are conditioned.

often give the simple example of two people working exactly the same job, doing the same things, side by side, for the same hours, same pay with the same boss and one is stressed and the other isn't. What's going on there? Well, one has intrinsic, internal stress. Maybe they have problems at home, maybe they hate themselves, perhaps they are sick and most often they just don't want to be there. Whereas the other person leads a simple life, no money worries, just does the work, gets paid and goes home happy everyday. Again, the word simplicity comes up. If you want to destress, try to simplify your life, like having less possessions, less people, less appointments and more time to be

yourself and do what you REALLY want to do. | used to say, **No Money, No Worríes!**

Modern people can't understand this, they think, more money, less worries but money can't buy peace, it looks like it can but remember peace is a mental state and it comes from the heart, not external things, other people or circumstances. Did you know money is only a concept, it is an idea, it is not a reality? A reality is something that can be experienced, how do you experience money? Seeing it? That is not money, it is seeing. Yes, you can feel it but that is just tactile sensation. Smell it? Taste it? Hear it? Or maybe think about it, oh we love to do that! However, none of these are money itself. They are merely perceptions of an external object, your mind can't experience money, it can only react to events or ideas that arise about money but that is not money itself. Weird isn't it? We treat money as if it is an extension of ourselves, my hand, my eyes, my life, my money! (Infortunately you don't own money, in fact money is the property of the bank or the government. |sn't it funny, we take a fist

full of dollars to the bank and deposit them and they give us a piece of paper with numbers on it, is that a fair trade? You don't have money anymore, now you just have numbers. Then you go to a shop to buy an item, they tell you how much it is in numbers and you put in a card and they take your numbers and you take your item, cool huh?

Besides, money is based on numbers and numbers don't exist in nature, again they are a concept. | love this! In nature there is no more than one of anything. It is only the human mind (I think) that counts and calculates in numbers. If there are one hundred trees in a forest (human concept), in fact there is only one, one, one, one, one.... They are all different, individual and unique, just like animals and humans and even mass produced things. Ten perfectly identical crystal glasses all lined up in their factory showroom but each one is completely independent and separate, unique, there is only one, one, one... ONE is the only number that really exists. Zero doesn't exist, as its name implies. All other numbers are concepts of one.

Even one as a word, doesn't exist, it's just a concept, words don't exist either! But you may say, l can read this word now! But what is a word but a string of letters and what is a single letter by itself? lt is meaningless, look >> r

What does that mean? Isolated, it means nothing but put into context and concept, it has meaning. We make up the meaning. In Chinese language 'r' doesn't mean anything, it is totally meaningless. Again, words don't exist in nature and you can't experience a word, you can experience the effect of the perception of a word. Do you see that this is all conceptual but we take it to be reality, we take it so seriously and we create stress and suffering where there is no need for it, and then we have the audacity to complain, amazing!

We have not been taught the true nature of life. It is nobody's fault, we can't blame our parents, teachers or society because they don't know. Even we get little hints about the truth from school, TV shows, movies, internet and books, etc but we don't have the truth spelled out to us. This too is why we are lost and suffering but there is no one to blame, not even yourself. You haven't done anything wrong, you are merely a product of your environment, your past experiences, your Karma, your conditioning and we are all the same.

Actually, there is nothing and no one to forgive, it becomes defunct, inapplicable. It is like trying to forgive nature for a tsunami or an avalanche or forest fire. You are not what you think you are. What you think you are is not what you are because thoughts are just concepts, so the thought of YOU is just another concept, a thought, that's all you are. But in actual fact you are consciousness, energy, flow, you are nature, light and infinite.

EXPECTATIONS!

In CAPITAL letters because it is SO IMPORTANT! It is one of the greatest objects of awareness and wisdom in this life! | have mentioned expectation a few times already but | believe it needs deeper explanation.

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Expectations are what one of my teachers refers to as, "yogi poison" because it "kills" the meditator. A meditator's practice is to be objectively aware in the present moment but when expectation is in the mind, it is not pure, it is looking for something, which is NOT present. When expectation is in the mind, | say;

You are looking at what you WANT and not at what you've GOT!

Which is contrary to the practice of meditation. So, do you want what you want in your imagination or do you want to see, know and understand the reality of what you have here and now? Are you ready to accept the reality of your body and mind as they now? Are you ready for the Truth? Most of us are not...

| realized that almost everything we do has an expectation. As | type these letters, | expect the words to appear on the screen, | expect my fingers to press the correct keys, | expect my eyes to work. If | pick up a glass of water, | expect it to weigh the "usual" weight and to feel hard and cool and to taste like water, etc. When | stand up, | expect my legs to work (painlessly) and when | put the key in the ignition of a car, | expect it to start. You expect your children to be well behaved, and your staff to do their work properly, and your government to support and protect you... the list goes on... Do you see that there is an expectation in almost every speech, action and thought that arise from your mind and it is projected onto family, friends, everyone and all things. And when anything in your life is NOT the way you want it to be you become disappointed, angry and even hatred may arise, all based on your desires.

EXPECTATION may lead to DISAPPOINTMENT

We may still imagine, design, create, build, manifest whatever we want, there are no rules about it, be free! Just watch your own mind and how expectations can turn into suffering.

Often we expect our bodies to be the way we want them to be and most of all, we expect our mind to be too. How do you expect YOUR mind to be, friend? Intelligent, non-forgetful, talented, clear, peaceful, happy, not afraid, aware (all the time!) and wise, unstressed, etc, etc. Another list that seems to go on and on. Well, guess what? Your mind is the way it is right now and there isn't anything you can do about it! Sounds like bad news right? However, as you read this and as this new information comes to mind, it changes the mind, it's not the same as it was at the beginning of this sentence, cool huh? So there is hope after all!

New information creates new thoughts and that creates new beliefs and new habits, that means new mind, new life, new world!

Yippee, yahoooo! With this simple understanding, one can be free from so-called "depression".

Depression

People lacking awareness repeat the "depression mantra" not only to themselves but almost everyone they meet. They say; "| am depressed!" "| am depressed!" So what does that lead to and perpetuate?

You know, I don't believe in depression, I believe that the mind changes moment to moment, so it can never be one thing permanently, so it can't be depressed ALL THE TIME. In the same way it can't be aware, happy or positive all the time and as | explained earlier, we are not in love all the time! It comes and goes, it changes! So next time, you are COMPLAINING to yourself about depression, take another look and realize that this is not depression, this is now complaining, and now you are surprised that you realized that and now you are planning to tell someone about this new experience, ooooh, hey, | am not depressed after all, | am changing moment to moment like everyone else!

Actually, the mind/ego wants to be depressed, it seems to like that "title" for itself so

that it can attach to it and complain about it and tell others. And people don't really want to be free from their depression because they associate with it, they relate to it, they ARE it and they say; " "]" am depressed!" If they get rid of depression, they get rid of themselves. Why would they want to get rid of this "|"? They hate this "|" but they love hating it and so it goes around and around and probably what they are calling depression is the habits, cycles and repetitions of the mind. Again, that's how everyone's mind works, sorry you are not as special as you thought you were, you are normal. We all have habits and repetitive behavior, that's how the mind works, get used to it and stop complaining about it. In fact, make the most of it and use it as an awareness advantage. Try writing down every time you see a particular habit or pattern, like complaining, for example. "How many times a day do complain?" Then change to another habit that you don't like, like worrying about the future. You can even have a different theme for the days of the week and change them each week.

Monday – expectation Tuesday – worry Wednesday – fear Thursday – Intention Friday – stress Saturday – resistance Sunday – impatience

This may all seem too negative for you but actually this is POSITIVE. Why? Because you are now aware of these states of mind and seeing them frequently, realizing they are useless and unnecessary, the mind will start to move away from these to more positive ways, trust the goodness of your mind. **"I have a good mind!"**

> Then try a positive week; Monday – awareness Tuesday – happiness Wednesday – generosity Thursday – forgiveness Friday – positive thoughts Saturday – acceptance Sunday – unconditional love

You could try alternating a negative day with a positive day. I think a diary or note taking is really useful and positive. Again you may see so called "negativities", which are normal and natural for everyone at different times but how can you be free if you don't even know what you are trying to be free from? You have to face it first, **see it, know it** and watch it go... Which is it's true nature anyway, all mental states go, they pass away, never to be repeated. Another similar one may appear but it is not the same one. Start to feel the flow of the new mind, a new experience in every moment, in this way we can let go of expectations too. How can we expect anything, if the present is a constant flow into the unknown future?

You may also use the same technique on depression as | have explained in stress. Depression is made up of many different mental states, so identify them one at a time and even investigate them deeply.

What is this? Why does it arise? What is it's cause?

|s this necessary? Does this make me happy? |s this what | want?

Goodbye "depression"!

Expectations Again

Most of the time, depression is actually disappointment, which in turn is caused by expectation, look at it within yourself and see if | am wrong. If you are disappointed, which is temporary, then you are not depressed. Watch that too, see how disappointment changes, dissolves and with awareness and wisdom can transform into acceptance, forgiveness and peace. That's what you want, isn't it? If you are disappointed many times, you start to think that you have no magic or you are stupid or lost, etc. This is when we need to come back to basics and appreciate the simple things that you have, like your breath, your eyes to see the sky and all of your senses to experience this world and this life, for in these simple senses is our connection to the truth. In experience, there is

nothing beyond your senses, this is how all the information of the world, your environment, people and your body come to you. These are your miracles, were you expecting something else? The fact that your mind can read these words and think and be aware, learn and understand new things everyday, every moment, isn't that a miracle in itself? Uncountable miracles flowing through each moment! If you don't believe me, just ask someone who has survived death and has another chance at life!] am so blessed that never happened to me,] found this truth through a natural inquisitiveness and through meditation with awareness and wisdom;

IAPPRECIATE MYSELF SOMUCH!!

Expectation is related to desire and it is often self-centred, egoistic. There is "|", "ME" or "MINE" at the centre of our expectations, this is clear when we say, "| was expecting..." Or, "This is not what | expected." Now don't *expect* to get rid of this "|", this ego. That is not the point, the point is to study it, realize it and pass through it or go beyond it or if you like, rise above it. Actually, we have to accept it, it is the "operating system" of the mind and it is not going away, however it is changing! Watch it change and evolve while becoming more aware and open to new ways of life.

Expectation and desire are normal and natural but that doesn't mean we can just follow them blindly, this is where wisdom is so important. We must discern whether a desire is harmful or not. So, again, we have to watch them, study them and see what happens when we follow them and when we ignore them. This is another experiment, be patient, be a scientist or your own psychologist and learn how your mind works without judgment or criticism, just watch and learn, as if it is someone else's mind.

Expectation may lead to disappointment.

That's a shame, isn't it? Never mind, just understand and let go of the expectation and you won't have the disappointment, cause and effect, simple huh? Actually, it doesn't only lead to disappointment, it leads to aversion, anger, hatred and even violence and killing. There's another good reason to **see it, know it watch it go....** it is unnecessary and useless, it disrupts the flow of spontaneity and creativity and perhaps it is also a cause for people to believe they are depressed, they are stuck in what they expect, rather than knowing what is really happening now, accepting it and **letting go, letting flow!** I think forgiveness is one of the greatest remedies for expectation or at least a reconciliation for it. I remind myself;

everyone has expectation, | didn't ask for it, it is the conditioning of the mind, it is unnecessary and | trust that this mind will see through it and replace it with open-mindedness, clarity and purity. This will lead to peace and happiness.

STEPTHREE

Forgiving Another Who Harmed Me

Introduction

This third step is what most people have been taught as forgiveness but as you have learned there is a lot more to forgiveness than trying to forgive someone who harmed you.

Many people when practicing forgiveness will report that they can more easily forgive others than themselves. That sounds goo, looks good and may even feel good but this is not yet forgiveness, they are only thinking about it, they have not yet reached deep and true forgiveness. Most people do forgiveness as an intellectual exercise but as you now know, it must come from the heart, not the head and not just words or nice ideas.

| have heard stories of families of murder victims having met the murderer and with true

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forgiveness even becoming friends. Again, the question arises, for how long is someone guilty of a crime and how long must they be punished? Who makes up these rules? Yes, in society a judge will do it but a judge cannot control anyone's heart. It is up to each one of us to know our own heart deeply and purify it with our own pure wisdom.

The same question applies to yourself; How long must | blame, judge and punish myself for? When can | be free from my own guilt?

If you have not yet realized the answers to these questions within yourself, then go back to step one or step two because step three is an intrinsic part of the first two steps. Without them, the last step is not sincere. If you really understand how you harmed others and yourself, then you will automatically forgive others for they are merely a reflection of yourself.

This is truly beautiful and you become your own living miracle.

YOU ARE A MIRACLE!

Look at Yourself

Remember, that just as much as another person may be at fault for harming you, you may have done something to provoke or antagonize them or you may have harmed them first. Look at yourself first and ask; "Did | push their emotional buttons?" "Did | harm him/her in any way?" Be honest, the ego will often hide this information to justify feeling resentment towards someone. We may also feel hurt by this person due to our own expectations. We may have thought that he/she shouldn't say, act or think the way they did, but they did. Are you angry because they did something that you didn't expect them to do? Perhaps they broke YOUR rules, which they were aware or unaware of. Maybe they had a different upbringing, different culture, different way of treating people or looking at life but you placed your values or standards on them and now you are judging them, blaming and perhaps punishing them for being the way the are. They were like that before you met them, that was their conditioning, just as you have been conditioned.

If you practiced the first two steps very well, the third one will be very easy. If it is not easy, it shows that you have not sufficiently understood and experienced the first two, go back and keep practicing. In other words, self forgiveness is the same as forgiving everyone because you fully realize that there is no difference between you and them. We all make mistakes, we all operate on greed, hatred and delusion most of the time and we all an inextricable part of this "quantum soup" that we call, the world.

Actually, if you FULLY understand the first two steps of forgiveness, then you have already finished this third step, there is nothing to explain to you and there is nothing for you to do.

We could even say that there are not really three steps to forgiveness,

THERE IS ONLY SELF FORGIVENESS, THAT'S ALL!

Why? Because the world and other people only exist through your own perception and if that perception is forgiven, then the world and everything in it is also forgiven. We are forgiving our mind, our conditioning, our past, our confusions and the way we used to see the world, it has all changed and is much clearer now.

Having said that, | will still explain the third step for those of you who want to go through the complete practice.

Technique of forgiveness WHO HARMED ME?

Reflect on a particular incident, there may be many but just take one at a time (yes, we are practicing patience too). You may see someone on the screen of your mind. Without going into the old story again, just ask yourself objectively; HOW DID HE/SHE HARM ME? Speech, action, thought or all of the above?

HOW WAS HIS/HER MIND?

Was that person selfish, aversive, confused or all of the above?

WERE THEY AWARE? No (like me) WERE THEY WISE? No (like me)

ARE THEY SORRY? They may or may not be sorry but that's not your concern. Remind yourself, that they are suffering like you and everyone else... They also want to be free. They will regret harming you at some point in their existence, if not it will manifest in their next existence when they will completely not understand why that suffering is arising. Trust the law of karma, trust cause and effect, it is objective and impersonal, if they really harmed you then they will feel bad and suffer in some way by the law of nature.

Leave it to karma!

IFORGIVE HIM/HER!

Repeat that a few times, slowly and check how it feels. Can you really agree with that and let it go? Does the mind feel clear and light? If you still feel some heaviness, confusion or uncertainty, then you haven't understood it yet. How you feel in your heart is the best indicator of whether forgiveness has worked or not. Your pure heart doesn't lie. Don't *expect* miracles, you just need to do some more work on yourself first, that's all, be patient.

MAY HE/SHE BE FREE FROM HIS/HER SUFFERING!

How does this feel? Is it coming from your heart? If not you may have to repeat the process.

Just as you have discovered within yourself, you may have harmed someone and thought that they deserved it or you thought it was the right thing to do at the time. Or you simply forgot about it or you didn't care but then realized later that besides all of the justification and excuses, YOU HARMED THEM! Now that you have woken up and you have realized that you are sorry and feel guilty and are ashamed of yourself. This is suffering, this is the effect of the suffering that you caused not only to them but to yourself. At some time, they will also feel the same way about having harmed you. This is karma, cause and effect, the natural law that is balancing everything all the time and in fact if we trust that, then there is nothing to do, except TRUST. Oh, you may also be appreciative and thankful for this balance and especially the peace that comes with it.

This can also mean that the universe will "punish" them, it is not up to you or any human law to punish them, they WILL eventually realize their mistakes and regret them, feel remorseful and ask for forgiveness in some way. Humans don't trust nature or natural law, they want to take things into their own hands and they want to return the suffering that they have felt, they want revenge. The saying is, "Revenge is sweet!" It may seem so but that too can be short lived and remorse can arise especially in the mind of a gentle soul. There have been many people put to death because of group mentality or public opinion, only to find out later the victim was innocent and they were wrong. Harming is harming, with or without the story, whether it is justified revenge or not, the facts remain. This is the work of the ego, to justify

harming with a good story. Ego feeds and lives on stories and concepts and believes them and just perpetuates its own suffering but the weird thing is, the ego itself is also a story, a mere concept, an idea, a belief but it won't admit to it.

Ego is like a TV show

A TV show that justifies itself being a TV show... Imagine; "Tonight Ladies and Gentlemen, we will justify why this TV show is on TV because without it, this TV show wouldn't exist so we need this show to show you that this show exists and therefore is right to be a TV show showing us what it needs to show!"

Would you watch such a show? Strangely enough we do watch, follow and encourage our ego. We get sucked in by its advertising and its stories. This is what the ego is constantly doing, reasserting itself and proving why it needs to exist. It has opinions and beliefs and proof to support its beliefs, especially about why it is right and others are wrong. "The world and other people are wrong

but me and my people are right!" "The world shouldn't be the way it is! It should be the way | want it to be!" So with an ego that is always right, then it will be an unforgiving ego, to itself and to anyone, thus it perpetuates its own suffering. What to do about this? Well conceptually, the ego must forgive itself for being an ego as | have explained in this book or ultimately it has to realize that it doesn't exist at all, as I have also explained. The second of these options is the wisest and fastest but is dependent upon realization that the ego, YOU, are a concept. That can only happen when the conditions are right and if you don't feel that yet, then buckle your seatbelt because you are in for more life lessons... Hold on!

Forgiving Criminals

People usually have a hard time to forgive hardened criminals and wish for them to be justly punished and that is normal in our society. The strange thing is that when you sit down and talk oneon-one with these murderers or rapists, etc, you find

that they are just like you and me. They have hopes and dreams, they want love and to be loved, they have greed, hatred and delusion, just as we do. In fact, there is not much difference between their mind and ours, it is just that they acted on their evil thoughts and we didn't. The evil is still there in our mind as a potential, which can explode at anytime under certain circumstances. Here, am not asking you to forgive the criminals of the world, | am asking you to forgive yourself for condemning them as if you are GOD and that you know the right and wrong way to live, as if you are the PURE ONE who knows all... Look at yourself, please. You don't know their conditioning that made them think and act in the harmful way they did. Your conditioning didn't lead you that way but it could have. I think about the boys from my school who ended up on drugs or in prison or even dead at a young age and | could have been one of them, it is so easy to get into a gang and can't get out or not know another way. People get stuck in their circle of friends and their lifestyle and don't know any other way of life. It is

like when we visit a small village and see how the people live so simply without money or television or a car and we may think; "Why don't they go to school and get an education and make money and make a life for themselves?" They don't know your way or maybe they don't care, that is their way of life and yours is your way. Forgive yourself for your ignorant view that makes you think that the world *should* operate according to your values, standards and conditions. In Christianity they say; Forgive them Lord for they know not what they do!

How wise and beautiful is that truth? They don't know what you know and you don't know what they know! Forgive yourself! In this way, I say that we are all students of all other people and situations in life. We are also all teachers, sharing our knowledge and experiences, preferably by example and living our own truth. Each person we meet has something to teach us, that is why we have met them, it may not be clear to you at the time but later it becomes clear when wisdom arises. With openness we can learn from everyone and every situation.

Sometimes, the more know, the more | know that | don't know! And sometimes, | feel that | really don't know anything! Or | think that | know nothing. Actually, knowing nothing is amazing! There aren't too many people who really know nothing, nothing is very hard to know! Can your ego be content with knowing nothing?

Face to Face Forgiveness

In this third step it can be a little tricky to go and forgive someone who harmed you. If it is very clear that they and everyone knows that they harmed you, then you may go ahead but if you doubt that they know, then I would be careful about it. Most people don't really understand true forgiveness, especially to the extent that it has been explained here, so to suddenly confront them with your forgiveness after a long time since the incident, it may shock them or they may react with anger.

Another thing is that over the years we have reflected, contemplated, introspected and become more sensitive, more loving and more forgiving but they may have not. In fact, the may have become harder, more cruel and full of hatred, which we now know is actually toward themselves but they don't know that. So again be careful, **use your wisdom** when approaching people to tell them that you forgive them, they may not be ready to hear it and to face themselves. You may like to contact them first and just speak generally and see if they are ready to talk about old stuff. Perhaps the fact that you have forgiven yourself and them will be evident to them without having to tell them that you forgive them.

| have done this with my mother a few times, whether she was ready for it or not, | have asked her for forgiveness for being a misbehaved son and | also forgave her for any misdemeanors she did to

me. No one is perfect and parents can get quite stressed and angry with their children (actually it is with themselves but they take it out on their children). Growing up can be really hard for everyone concerned and for some of us we never really get out of those growing pains. Life's lessons just keep coming one after the other. Be patient, it is not easy to be human, forgive yourself, accept your lessons, reflect on what you have learned and re-use your own wisdom, help yourself. Insight, realizations and wisdom are not trophies that we just put on a shelf for show, they are to be re-applied to our life, they are tools for more learning and eventually, when you have learned your lessons, your insights are your keys to freedom. | believe that freedom is the natural trajectory of all humans and in fact all beings. In that case, whatever suffering we have gone through, are going through or will go through in the future, we will go THROUGH it! There is light at the

end of every dark tunnel, there is calm

after every storm, as much chaos as there is in life, there is that much peace, everything is balancing, whether it is clear to you now or not, this is the way, the middle way... Relax and go with the flooooow~~~~~

> We are not forgetting or deleting our past, we are waking up to it, realizing it. Only by understanding our past with honesty and integrity can we truly let go of our past.

THE FORGIVENESS WAY OF LIFE

Once you have practiced forgiveness to a large extent, you see opportunities for forgiveness everywhere. For me, hardly a day passes when | don't at least contemplate forgiveness. Each day offers some situation where | can recommend forgiveness to someone or | do it myself or | see potential for it. Sometimes, even while watching a movie | might think to myself; "If that guy forgave that girl, they would be happy!" Of course, then the movie would lose it's drama and turn into a love story, hahaha! If you look at the events in your daily life through the filter of forgiveness, your whole life may become a love story! Wouldn't you like to live in Heaven on Earth? By the way, that is not a myth but it is also not a place, it is not on earth as such, it is a quality of mind available to us all here and now!

We may have to go through hell to get to heaven. Without hell, there may be no heaven.

Summary of the Three Steps

As a summary of our three step forgiveness practice and a way that we may use it generally in our daily life, there are five condensed parts of each step to forgiving yourself and others;

First, wise reflection ~ we reflect and recall some harm caused by ourselves or others.

Second, honesty ~ objectively review, greedy, angry, confused or all of the above?

Third, understanding oneself ~ question the intention, awareness and wisdom.

Fourth, forgiveness.

Fifth, compassion ~ wishing freedom from suffering.

Look at the beautiful words and their meanings; **Wise reflection**

Honesty

Understanding oneself

Forgíveness

Compassion

Couldn't we all do with a lot more of these every day in our life? If this is what you want, then here is the information that will lead you to fulfillment and satisfaction with yourself, your life and the world in general.

One way in which we may practice forgiveness on a daily basis is just before we go to sleep, we may reflect on our day and ask ourselves; "Who did | harm today?" Then, choose one person and simply go through the five points laid out above, which will become quite natural for you anyway and then go to sleep with a clear conscience. Remember, don't get stuck in the story and justify your speech, actions and thoughts, be objective, look only at the facts and processes, make note of where you went wrong and make a **determination** to be more mindful next time and not to do that again. Be careful NOT to tell yourself; "| WILL NOT do that again!" |t seems right and harmless enough but what will happen if you do it again? You will be disappointed with yourself, blame and punish yourself, oops! That's not forgiveness! Let's include an escape clause in your determination by saying, "I will TRY to not do that again." Give yourself the benefit of

the doubt, be honest and realistic, you may do it again, keep an open mind and remember this is an experiment, we are retraining the mind, it takes time and patience, be gentle with yourself.

General Forgíveness

Our practice of forgiveness may also extend to other living beings, not just humans. In our lifetime, intentionally or unintentionally, we have harmed many insects, animals, maybe angels, spirits or even gods! Who knows?! We may do general forgiveness;

"In many ways, I have harmed living beings, I was unaware and unwise, I forgive myself!" "May all beings that I have harmed in any way please forgive me as I forgive myself."

"May all beings be free from suffering! May they be safe, peaceful and healthy!"

Please don't skip the three steps of forgiveness and just do this, it is quite wonderful but you will only get the real and full benefit from it after completing the three steps. This is for the mature forgiver!

Forgiveness does work miracles in your life but it should be practiced with an open mind as an experiment and without expectations. If it doesn't seem to work for you, it is because you have not yet understood yourself and the technique, go back to step one and start again, this is also the practice of patience...

You will know if forgiveness works or not you can FEEL IT! | don't really want to spell out how it feels to you because | don't want to build expectations in your mind and would rather you feel it for yourself but it doesn't really matter because eventually, with **practice**, **patience** and **perseverance** you will feel it for yourself. Perhaps you can imagine what it feels like... stop that! Don't just imagine or speculate about it, there is too much of that in the world already, practice and REALLY FEEL it for yourself!

The mind feels free from suffering and it is more open, spacious, lighter, happier and more peaceful, loving and more compassionate. Also, we have the ability to rejoice in others' success and happiness and we realize that ultimately all beings have their own Karma according to nature and beyond my control. This is pure acceptance.

Of course, what | have explained in this book are exercises that we may do in our own mind - it is mind training. However, in our life, if we have the opportunity to meet those people with whom we have issues and ask for or offer them our forgiveness, then we should do so. You may need to make a phone call or write an email or a letter, just do it!! We never know when we will pass from this life, it may be today or tomorrow or very soon, please don't wait till you are dying or they are dead then there will be even more regret.

>>>ACTNOW>>>

Forgiveness and Death

Please don't wait until you are dying to do forgiveness. The point is to free your mind from the past now and enjoy life with a light and breezy heart until you die.

One of my first teachers taught me to reflect on death. It is one of the most profound teachings | have ever received. He gave us a mantra to repeat and reflect upon;

> My life is not lasting, my death is sure to come, inevitable is my death, my life will end in death, life is uncertain, death is certain.

took this to heart and very quickly had the realization that AMGOING TODIF! Yeh,] know, it's a basic truth but | had never really thought about it and had never *realized* it. | used this mantra day or night, anytime | remembered it, | would recite it to myself. Now one may think that this is a morbid topic and why would we want to think about our own death? Well friends, the effect it has is to wake one up! It gives us "spiritual urgency". And what an amazing energy that is!! It burned strongly in me for many years and | greatly appreciate that teacher for having the wisdom and foresight to share it with me! Not everyone is affected the way | was, some people read this and say, so what? No worries, just go on with your life, there is no expectation for you to do anything but at some point in your life, you will naturally contemplate your own death and what happens after it, and THEN you may experience the energy of spiritual urgency!

When someone we know dies suddenly without any warning, we may realize that we have "unfinished business" with them, things we wanted to say or do with them but it is now too late. This practice of reflecting on death, helps us to finish up our business now, especially forgiveness, so that we may be free to go at anytime. **Are you ready to die?** No, really, are you ready to depart this life, today?

A point | reflect upon is; Do you realize that when you die, other people are going to go through all your possessions, all your clothes, your cupboards, drawers, photographs, even your phone and computer? They will throw most of it away or give it to charity or maybe sell it and make some money for themselves...

lf you know you will die tomorrow, what will you do today?

Good question, huh? This is not just an idle question, really take this to heart and ask yourself deeply;

"What is important for me?"

What do | want to achieve in this life before | pass? What do | want to leave behind?

Am | leaving any mess for someone else to clean up? Have | released myself from my past with forgiveness?

Who else can | help for them to release themselves with forgiveness?

| could go through these questions one by one explaining their meaning and give you examples but | would prefer you to investigate them deeply and maybe find your own questions and answers about yourself and your life. Take notes, it helps a lot!

People often ask if we can do forgiveness for dead people. Well, they are not "dead people" anymore, they now have been reborn in some new existence, so in fact we are asking forgiveness from another being, their new life form, which probably doesn't have any recollection of its previous life and certainly doesn't remember you. However, the answer is yes, we can do it but just realize that mostly you are forgiving yourself as you were and as you are now, that's your current reality. For more on this please refer back to the section on **"Absentee Forgiveness"**.

A Forgiveness Letter

A technique that is quite effective for some is to write a letter of forgiveness even if the person has passed on or still alive. Writing the letter to them, whether you send it or not helps to organize your thoughts, it clears confusion and you can review what you have done so far. That's why all through this book | have been recommending you to make your own lists, write down the questions, the answers and even your feelings as you progress with this practice. It can help greatly in your ability to forgive and set yourself free and those people in your life that have suffered with you. When you forgive and release the past, others in your life feel your relief and become happier with you. Forgiveness is for EVERYONE in your life, your family, friends, work colleagues and everyone you meet. It spreads to the community, country and the whole world, much further than you can imagine ...

After we have done some intensive forgiveness with ourselves, we will then have a greater understanding of what forgiveness is and how it feels and it will become a natural part of our psyche and our character. In other words it will never be far from our awareness and it may be called upon whenever we need it. It becomes a very skillful tool for our daily life, especially in relationships and dealing with people. I think if we are living each day with forgiveness, we will continue to release ourselves and all beings from blame and the misery caused by ignorance, the lack of wisdom.

Lead a Harmless Life

You may have noticed that after each reflection in the forgiveness practice, there are a few words of **compassion**, this is very important for the healing process. We are acknowledging the suffering and wishing for it to ease and cease in ourselves, in others and in fact for all living beings.

One way that we can personally prevent causing more suffering is by accepting some simple guidelines into our life. Your religion has a set of suggestions for a good way of life and being a good person. If you have no religion, here is a very simple philosophy;

Avoid harm (to yourself, others and all beings)

Do good (being considerate, generous, kind and helpful)

Purify the mind (with awareness, concentration and wisdom)

The Five Virtues

Buddhists know them as the Five Precepts. | see them not so much as rules but just very good advice and guidelines for purifying one's own karma. Each one has two parts, the first being that which we should avoid (unwholesome action/karma) and the second is what we should try to do (wholesome action/karma);

Not killing or harming living beings (including oneself).

Being kind and considerate to oneself and to all beings.

- 2 ~ Not stealing or taking anything that is not mine.
 - + Being generous and liberal with my energy,

money and possessions.

3 - No harmful sexual activities.

+ (Ising unconditional love in my speech, actions and thoughts.

4 - No harmful speech.

+ Being careful with every word | say and listening well to others.

5 - No alcohol or drugs.

+ Keeping the mind clear and pure with natural energy.

These five simple and universal guidelines can protect us from harm and harming ourselves and others and spread good-will among all living beings and lead us along a path of purification to enlightenment and freedom.

By adopting these principles into our life, we may feel free from guilt and live a blameless life and there will be NONEED to do forgiveness for oneself again.

> Remove the cause and the effect is also removed, wonderful!

After each session of forgiveness, we may remind ourselves of these five virtues, simple ways of living a pure and harmless life and make some determination to follow and live by them.

Sharing of Merits

Buddhists believe that after doing a wholesome act of any kind there is goodness or merit generated. That merit may be shared with departed relatives or friends wherever they have been reborn to promote a greater life for them in case they have no opportunity to do good where they are.

"By the power of my virtue and pure intentions in practicing forgiveness, may [relative's name] share in these merits and always live in peace and harmony!" We may do the same for living people who may need a little extra goodness in their life, maybe someone who is ill or dying, it is a type of prayer and sharing positive energy. We may also radiate it out generally in all directions to all beings;

"May all beings share in these merits and live in peace and harmony!"

Forgiveness is Like Surgery

diagnosis = seeing one's own suffering like guilt and regret, being honest with oneself.

incision (opening up) = looking deeply into one's
own heart, beginning with self inquiry, asking the
very important questions explained earlier.
removing = realizing one's fault, knowing the past as
it was, purifying the mind, learning a life lesson with
awareness and wisdom.

stitching = genuine remorse and believing in your own self forgiveness.

healing = compassion and well wishing.
prevention = resolution and determination to be

more careful and more vírtuous for a blameless future (without expectations).

When to do Forgíveness?

Preferably before you die... *wink*wink Well, it is really up to you and your availability. If you are soooo busy with working, family, friends, etc, then you will have to do it whenever you can. A friend of mine likes to contemplate when he is driving, he says it is the only time he gets to himself, if you are like that then make driving, forgiveness time. Maybe when you wake up in the morning, do a little reflection on your past before you head off into your future. A great time to do it is at night, laying in bed before you go to sleep. You may reflect on your day and ask yourself, who did | harm today? Having forgiven yourself and others from your day, the mind is free and falls asleep easily. Or you can quickly run through the first step with regard to the more distant past. When we are skillful with forgiveness, it doesn't take long to do the reflection and let it go, try it for yourself. Do it when you are walking or eating, working or exercising, anytime when you are by yourself with time to think.

Other people who may have a lot of time can do it whenever they like, while strolling in nature or while gardening, shopping or just sitting at home doing nothing... except forgiveness!

Take your time with it, don't rush it, time is not important, self-honesty and self-understanding are important.

Teacher/Student Forgiveness

In ancient traditions, it is often the practice for a student to ask for forgiveness from the teacher before leaving, especially if going away for a long time or not returning. This is so that the student will not harbor thoughts like; The teacher doesn't like me or the teacher thinks | am stupid or | shouldn't have spoken, acted or thought in that way about the teacher. So the student pays respects to the teacher and asks for forgiveness, something like;

"If in speech, action or thought, I have harmed or offended you in any way, please forgive me." Or similarly;

"If by body, speech or mind, I have harmed or offended you in any way, please forgive me."

This is also offering the teacher an opportunity to correct any faults noticed in the student. Some teachers may simply reply; "There is nothing to forgive." Others may offer some advice to the student. Then the student may leave with a happy and free heart with regard to that teacher. Certain teachers may also ask the same of their students. Sometimes this exchange of forgiveness is done ceremoniously in a group but | prefer to do it individually and sincerely whenever possible.

I find that this attitude is very useful in our daily life too. Asking a boss for forgiveness before leaving a job or after staying at someone's house we may ask for forgiveness for any infringements upon their "house rules". Or perhaps when breaking up a relationship with someone. This is one of the reasons why people are so miserable after breaking up because they have unfinished business and have not done forgiveness. They continue blaming the other for their unhappiness and sufferings, which we have learned are self inflicted. People will say that it is so hard for them to admit fault and show "weakness" or "inferiority" to the other but | think it is better than living in guilt, regret and self imposed suffering for so long or so many years. You choose! This is a clear case of holding on and suffering or letting go and being free. | know which one | prefer, it's better to put my ego through some shame and embarrassment initially for the sake of feeling free later on. Admitting one's faults, asking for forgiveness, learning from them and moving on to a brighter and lighter future, this is up to you. What do you want?

Just on the subject of so called, "teacher" and "student", | am not sure what these terms really mean anymore because | learn so much from my "students" and especially from sharing with them that | think it is me who is the student. That's why these days | prefer to just call everyone "friends" or "spiritual friends" depending on the depth of our lessons. | believe we are all learning from each other and there is no heirachy as such but simply a free exchange of information and experiences.

Simplicity

This a great "friend" and "teacher". Living with few and inexpensive possessions, | don't have to worry about guarding or losing them, | let them come and let them go. Most of my clothes and things | buy secondhand and all of my stuff is disposable and dispensable. This body too is dispensable, composed of elements, it belongs to the universe and was never my property anyway, so nothing to take and nothing to give back, we are already free. This attitude helps us to live free from fear and worry about our body and physical possessions and also to be free from harmful desire and greed for more stuff. This constant craving for more, more money, more food, more fun, sex, love, happiness and even peace is what is driving us mad and making us very tired and frustrated. There is another way and it is the way of contentment.

Practicing acceptance of what you had in the

past and what you have now, being satisfied with all that you have in your life including friends and family and opportunities and even simple things like the air you breathe and the daylight that shows you your world.

Appreciation and Gratitude

Another daily life experience that makes us feel light and flowing, just recognizing the beauty, quality or usefulness of anything in your life. We may still work towards more possessions or love, happiness and peace or whatever you think you want or need but try to be aware of what you already have and feel grateful for even your "bad" experiences in life have brought you to this present moment and shown you exactly what you needed to know. Releasing attachment to what you have and have achieved and releasing expectations for more in the future. Living freely and freestyle with everything and everyone exactly as they are now.

Here is another excellent daily reminder for when you feel greedy or you lack something;

YOU CANNOT HAVE MORE THAN WHAT YOU HAVE IN THIS MOMENT... IT IS IMPOSSIBLE BECAUSE THIS MOMENT JUST DISAPPEARED!

Here you may realize that your mind is almost always either in the past or in the future, we call that thinking, imagining, reflecting and projecting. You may have had more in the past or you may have more in the future but in reality you only have what you have now and that is the TRUTH!

And NOW is the only moment that exists, so relax, be thankful, accept and appreciate what you have, make plans for the future but be aware of your expectations and just do your best, that's all! Oh, and relax again, hehe!

You have what you have now due to past speech, actions and thoughts, it is merely cause and effect, karma. So if you don't get what you expect, then forgive yourself because this is the effect of you as you were in the past and you didn't know then what you know now. To me, this wisdom makes perfect sense but | can imagine some egos strongly resisting this and wanting to argue, go ahead, that's just more internal suffering. Later on, you will come to realize that what you truly want is peace, just peace.

Acceptance and Forgiveness

I have realized that our ability to accept the way things are is in fact a form of or the same as forgiveness. By accepting my body the way it is, I forgive it for its faults and imperfections. It is not the way that | want it to be, of course, | want it to be perfect but it's not, it is the way it is... So | forgive my body, | forgive myself. This doesn't mean that | can't work to improve it, sure | can, if that's what | really want or need but either way that starts with acceptance of the way it is now.

My mind is also not perfect, of course. it forgets things and is lazy and complaining, it is not always the way | want it to be but | accept it the way it is and | forgive myself. This is a revelation! And it can only arise based on the realization of the TRUTH of the way everything is now. And so this acceptance will naturally extend and expand the same way to all people, all beings, all things, the environment, the universe and in fact my past, my future and my entire existence!

Acceptance arises from awareness and wisdom, then comes forgiveness, followed by pure appreciation with respect and unconditional love and finally, peace and harmony ~ Isn't that what you want?

Future Forgiveness

| had an interesting insight one day while contemplating self forgiveness, | thought, "| forgive my future self." Yeh, it's funny isn't it? |t means that whatever mistakes | will make in the future, | already forgive myself. | have explained how we can forgive who we were and who we are so why not who we will be? Yes, I know it is conceptual but it is opening the mind to wider and greater possibilities. In this way, we are projecting our present wisdom into the unknown future in the hope that it will act as a prompt when we make a mistake at any time. Or an even better wish is that BEFORE we make a mistake, we will remember our future forgiveness from the past and not make the mistake in the present, that is in the future present, do you follow me? Haha, who knows what will happen? I am just offering you every aspect of forgiveness | can find in the hope that it will help you to purify your íntentíons, your karma and ultímately, purífy your mind. So we may say;

"Whatever harm | may cause in the future, | will *attempt* to forgive myself."

When referring to the future, | try to use the

words "attempt" or "will try" because | am not sure if | definitely will do something or not. | don't make promises to myself or anyone else because | don't know how | will feel or react in the future, so | offer myself these "escape clauses" so that | won't blame or punish myself because | broke my own promise. Check this within yourself, it is a way that we cause suffering to ourselves is by not keeping promises to ourselves or to others. People will also pressure you to make a promise to them, the best way to avoid this is to not make any promises at all, | say,

| will try, | will do my best, | would like to, | am not sure, let's wait and see...

l try not use definite terms because they come back to me. Here, we are clearing our karma for the future, this is WISDOM IN ACTION!

Obviously, | don't want to cause any harm in the future but | am not perfect, so | accept my faults but still have a determination to improve and to be a better and better person, one who lives harmoniously with all living beings. | think and | heard this somewhere recently, that an enlightened person can still say and do things that may "make" people angry or react negatively but the difference is that the enlightened one has *no intention* to cause harm or suffering to any living being in any way. It is the unenlightened beings who are looking through the eyes and minds of anger, delusion and ignorance that they see in that way. The enlightened ones see the world as light, thus enLIGHTenment, it must be so beautiful to live in light!

Well, that's about all | have to share with you about forgiveness until | remember something else or | have a new experience, which is bound to happen. |f | have forgotten something, | forgive myself!

Hopefully, we can meet one day and share our experiences and keep generating this amazing and beautiful energy of forgiveness for the benefit of future generations and for all living beings in all directions!

Thank you for your patience and consideration!

May your practice and experience of forgiveness show you a beautiful way of life!

May all of your family and friends also benefit from your kindness!

And may all beings in all directions share in the merits of writing and reading this book and may all beings live in peace and harmony!



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* IMO ~ In Memory of

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~ Venerable Ñāṇadassi

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