

Practical Exercises to Help You Finally Forgive Yourself

I want to share with you a very effective exercise that I have done with clients in my counseling office for well over a decade. Simply reading this will not give you any impact. Doing the exercise can be a life changing experience. I can't tell you how many clients of mine have read these different exercises before seeing me. They just read them and didn't do them. When they come to the office and did the exercises they were amazed at how effective they really were.

In this exercise you will need two chairs facing each other. The first chair on the left will be chair A for our discussion. The second chair on the right will be Chair B for our discussion

Now place yourself in Chair A to start this exercise. In Chair A you are going to be yourself. In Chair B, you're going to imagine you are also talking to yourself. In my case, real Doug is talking to imaginary Doug in Chair B.

Now as the real person, I want you to own your sin. Apologize and ask forgiveness for the sins you committed toward yourself. So Doug is talking out loud in Chair A to empty Chair B.

The conversation might go, "I need you to forgive me for ..."
The list of sins will vary from person to person. Include sexual, relational, financial and other sins you can remember.

When you are done talking in Chair A, physically move into Chair B. Place your body in Chair B. Now in Chair B you just heard what you said in Chair A. Now you will get to respond. The most important thing is that you are honest in Chair B. If you can forgive yourself, great.

Some, for whatever reason, will find it difficult to forgive themselves or maybe not be able to forgive themselves at all. Just be honest. This exercise is not to get you to forgive yourself, but rather to assess where you are in the forgiveness process. If you were able to forgive yourself, place your body back in Chair A.

If you were unable to forgive yourself, you can stop the exercise and try again in a month to see where you are at that time. Repeat this self-forgiveness exercise monthly until you feel you have honestly forgiven yourself.

If you forgave yourself, you are now back in Chair A. Now respond to the forgiveness you have received from your statements in Chair B. When you completed responding to the self-forgiveness, just sit there a minute and let your heart just feel the forgiveness. This may be the first time you truly extended forgiveness toward yourself in any tangible way. You're worth giving this forgiveness to yourself.

Let's look at some possible goals for you to be successful in forgiveness.

- I will make a daily log of sins (which may be attitudes, behaviors or the lack of) that I committed against others.
- I will keep track daily how long it takes me to ask for forgiveness of a sin I commit toward others.
- I will make a plan to concentrate on one area of sin I commit toward others by daily measures.
- I will keep a log as to whether I went to sleep without asking for forgiveness from others.
- I will make a note at the end of the day of sins others have made toward me. I will go into a room alone and not leave until I have forgiven them of that sin without them asking for forgiveness.
- I will daily log if I went to bed without fully forgiving others.

- I will keep track of sins I commit throughout the day against myself. I will forgive myself of sins I commit.

You know you can't change others, but you can change yourself, you have the power to forgive. As this becomes a lifestyle pattern, you can feel more honest as you regularly ask forgiveness, which will help you experience that you are keeping your side of the street clean. It's great to give that grace to others and allow them to be flawed, imperfect but still be so very much loved by God and by you. You deserve this lifestyle of freedom!

Can you imagine going day to day just giving love and forgiveness? Day after day you're forgiving of others even if they don't ask or repent. You just give it away like candy to them, and they don't even know.

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