

This 3-Step Process Could Save You Hundreds of Hours of Painful Conflict With Your Spouse

“Gook” is what I call sins, mistakes, willfully and unknowingly hurting each other, which all of us have. Since not one of us is sinless, everyone will have to deal with the issue of this “gook.” There is another way to live. I call it the forgiveness lifestyle. It will cost you some time and effort, but down the road, you can save hundreds of hours in pain or conflict. This forgiveness lifestyle helps you live fully.

You will have to work hard, but I encourage you to do this so you can have a forgiveness lifestyle.

1. **You First**

“You first” is the best first step in the forgiveness lifestyle. I have seen people have great difficulties forgiving others if they have not first forgiven themselves. So as I said, “you first.”

Take a few minutes and make a list of how you have sinned against yourself. We all have sinned and we all have sinned against ourselves. This sin toward ourselves can limit us in a forgiveness lifestyle. If you can’t forgive a sin in your life, often you can’t forgive others of the same sin.

Unfortunately, you can’t just make a list. You do need to somehow verbally ask for forgiveness and say out loud, “I forgive you” or “I don’t forgive you.” Knowing where you are with forgiving yourself can help you in the forgiveness lifestyle.

2. Your Past

Most of us have had people who have hurt us deeply. For some, it's our parents, friends, past romantic relationships, significant traumas or even past marriages. For those who have experienced trauma, I recommend you email my office at heart2heart@. I have an exercise called "Cleansing the Temple" that can really help facilitate healing if you feel that some of those hurts would actually fall under the category of trauma.

Make a list of the people who have sinned against you; make a note of the specific sin that this person committed against you.

Example: "Person's Name: Sinned against me by ..."

Your list may be only a few people or it may be several. As a counselor I know we all have very unique journeys and have our own individual list of who hurt us and what the hurt was.

As you did with yourself, speak this out loud and forgive out loud as you do this alone. If you run into something you can't forgive, be honest and plan to work on this for yourself in the future.

Remember, forgiveness is a gift you give yourself. This gift allows you to disconnect from the perpetrator and the pain. Again, if your pain was trauma, do the cleansing the temple exercise prior to doing the forgiveness exercise.

3. Your Spouse

It's true: You married a sinner. Some of their sins will be small and some will be, let's just say, bigger than little sins.

So as with yourself and others you need to make a list of these sins; be they behaviors, lack of behaviors or attitudes. Under *no* circumstances are you to show this list to your

spouse.

This forgiveness is for you regardless of your spouse's awareness. Just as you have unknowingly sinned against your spouse and forgotten some of these sins, so has your spouse forgotten some of their sins against you. You have your list, and just as before, read one out loud at a time. Remember to forgive out loud as well.

You may not be able to forgive all of the sins you listed. Some of the items may even fall into the trauma category. If so, do the cleansing the temple exercise (Found in the book *Intimacy: A 100-Day Guide to Lasting Relationships*) so you can more fully heal before you attempt the forgiveness exercise.

If there are things on your list you are not presently able to forgive, be honest. These issues you can't yet forgive are the issues you need to work on with yourself and the Lord or a pastor or counselor.

Remember, forgiveness is a gift you give to yourself. As you have a forgiveness lifestyle going forward, you will find forgiveness happening for you much more quickly, even if your spouse doesn't request it. {eo}

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