

# PAUQUETTE NEWS

The Pauquette Center for Psychological Services Newsletter

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## Forgiving Yourself

*Adapted from the article Forgive Yourself published in Your Wise Brain, by Rick Hanson, Ph.D.*

Most of us find it easier to forgive someone than to forgive ourselves. We beat ourselves up past the point of usefulness. So why is that we can't we forgive ourselves?

Inside our heads are several different inner voices. One of those voices can constantly nag at you everyday. Your inner critic wants to find fault in anything. It can magnify small failings into large ones and punish you over and over. It can also ignore the larger context of the situation and doesn't want to credit you for your efforts to make amends. What you need to do is calm that voice and let your inner protector speak up.

Your inner protector will put your weaknesses and misdeeds into perspective. It will show you your good qualities and help you get off the low road and onto the high road. With the support of your inner protector, you will be able to clean up the mess you made as best you can and move on. The point is to learn from your mistakes so that you will never do them again. Carrying around excessive guilt doesn't help anyone and will actually hinder you in your day to day life.

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***“Forgiveness is  
a gift you give  
yourself.”***

*-Tony Robbins*

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Offices in Portage, Columbus, Richland Center, Baraboo, Reedsburg, and Prairie du Sac



# How Can We Forgive Ourselves?

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1. Start with something small that you're still being hard on yourself for.
2. Now focus on the feeling of being cared for and about. List some of your good qualities.
3. Now, say you yelled at your child, acknowledge the facts. Notice any of the facts that are hard to face (i.e., the look in your child's face when you yelled at him/her). Be open and honest with them.
4. Sort what happened into three piles: moral faults, unskillfulness, and everything else. Moral faults deserve proportionate guilt, remorse, or guilt. Unskillfulness calls for correction and nothing else.
5. Take responsibility.
6. Acknowledge what you've already done to learn from this mistake and repair and make amends.
7. Ask yourself: "does anything else need to be done?." If there is, do it.
8. Listen to that inner protector and if it is still saying something needs to be done, do it (i.e., say you're sorry).
9. Now forgive yourself. You have done all you can do. Learn and move on.

Sometimes you have to do these steps more than once and that's okay. Do whatever it takes to stop beating yourself up.



## Rules of Forgiveness

Forgiveness isn't easy. There are no simple ways to forgive yourself or someone else, but there are a few principles to keep in mind when trying to be better at forgiveness.

1. **Forgiveness doesn't mean forgetting.**
  - Forgive and forget do not go hand in hand. You can forgive, yet still remember.
2. **Forgiveness doesn't lessen your victimization.**
  - Forgiving someone who has harmed you emotionally or physically, doesn't mean that you are saying it was okay. You can still forgive and know that what you went through was very real and harmful.
3. **Forgiveness doesn't mean you are weak.**
  - It takes a strong person to forgive.
4. **Forgiveness doesn't depend on the other person.**
  - Sometimes the person who wronged you may not fully understand or admit that what he or she did was wrong. This is okay, because you don't need their understanding or acceptance to forgive them. All it takes is you.
5. **Forgiveness is a process.**
  - Forgiveness isn't an all or nothing thing. You may never be able to fully forgive, but you can work towards complete forgiveness.
6. **Forgiveness is for your health & well-being.**
  - Holding on to anger and resentment is toxic for your health. People don't want to be around those who are always angry, bitter, etc. Forgiveness is something you're going to do for yourself.
7. **Forgiveness is letting go of anger.**
  - Whether you have been terribly traumatized or victimized, those who learn to forgive and let go of the anger do well and cope best in life.

Adapted from the article "7 Rules of Forgiveness," by Thomas Plante, Ph.D.