

# Unforgivingness

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Tips of the Day · 2 min read

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Unforgivingness is yet another form of hatred. We have been injured in some way. We feel hurt. We are angry with and hate what the person did and we are angry with and hate the person who did it. Sometimes we would be happy to forgive, if only they would say sorry and we can see that they mean it. Sometimes we are happy for them just to voice it. Sometimes this won't do, because we want some show of genuine contrition. We want them to offer reparation – an offering in kind, a small gift. Anything will do so long as there is a gesture. Sometimes this won't do either. The anger and hatred we feel demand compensation equal to the wrong doing, but more. We say we don't want to take revenge. We just want them to know how much they made us suffer. And it might just teach them a lesson. We often call this justice. Sometimes the suffering as punishment we impose on someone may gratify, whether it be withdrawal of support, or favour, or friendship, and in some cases of freedom or even of life. But more often it doesn't because anything done out of anger and hatred simply feeds that attitude. We don't feel they have suffered enough. 'Justice has been done.' But justice is a malleable concept. There is no universally accepted punishment for a crime. For similar crimes, some societies hang people, maim people. Other societies call this barbaric. The leniency of some societies is seen by others as weak and ineffectual. It may not be just those people whom we are in contact with and have 'injured' us, no matter how slightly, that we need to forgive, but the big players also – politicians, corporations, bankers, 'them'. And there are those who say, 'I can't forgive'. But this is a child's 'can't'. They are really mean 'won't'. Now when it comes to actual pain or damage to the body whether slight or severe, that is one thing, but any negative, unwholesome reaction to it is the suffering. Even so we can justly claim compensation for harm done. And although there is a sorrow that comes from any pain or loss by way of any form of violence to oneself or to the other (broken limbs, acid in the face, murdered relative), grief is a measure of attachment. Sorrow is the sadness at the needless pain or loss of life that should move us towards compassion, even for the perpetrator and further afield to undermine the causes of violence. Knowing the difference is crucial to bring closure. All grief, anger and revenge are reactions by the aggrieved. Forgiving, then, begins by refusing to act out of anger and hatred. It is made easy once we realise that the hurt and grief we feel is self-generated and needs time and vipassana (insight) to dissolve. It is we who injure our own hearts. When we realise this, we don't need even an apology from the other in order to forgive. Here's the Buddha: 'He abused me, he hit me, he overpowered me, he robbed me.' Those who indulge such thoughts do not rid themselves of anger and hatred. 'He abused me, he struck me, he overpowered me, he robbed me.' Those who do not indulge such thoughts rid themselves of anger and hatred. If you want to go into the Buddhist psychology of forgiveness, have a look at my effort. You will also find multiple exercises there. Towards the End of Forgiveness. Download from: [Towards the End of Forgiveness](#) or get a copy from

<http://www.wisdom-books.com/ProductDetail.asp?PID=23660> Pay postage only. If you have read a book or heard a talk which you consider useful to those who may find forgiving difficult, do email me.

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