

How to Forgive Yourself

Self-forgiveness is an essential part of leading a more truthful, happier life.

NEWPORT BEACH, CALIFORNIA, USA, March 12, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Forgiving ourselves for our past actions is often easier said than done. The good news is, we are capable of forgiving ourselves, no matter the pain or heartache we've caused in the past. In fact, self-forgiveness is an essential part of leading a more truthful, happier life.

Recently, there was a woman from my town who has four children of her own and she went out drinking one night. On her drive home, she crashed into another car with three teenagers and killed all of them. She was sentenced to 51 years in prison for her

consequential choice that evening. Most of us reading this story can't relate to this type of crime, but I think it's safe to assume we've all made decisions that could have had really harmful consequences. Or we've caused people intentional, or unintentional harm that we later regretted.

One of the listeners of this podcast sent the following email, "Hello, Dr. Puff, I'm a long time listener. In my early childhood, I experienced a lot of violence, both verbal and physical from my parents and others, and I inflicted the same [violence] upon my sister. I witnessed my father being violent with my mother and others. I actually thought it was a normal part of life to be violent, mean, and judgmental. As I got older, and after I started listening to your podcast, I became aware that my behavior was extremely wrong. I have genuinely apologized to her many times and explained that my awareness wasn't there and I deeply regret my actions. Although we have been apart for more than 20 years, and she's a professional with a wonderful family, she still has very negative thoughts about me and lashes out at me. She blames me for ruining her life. In your podcast, you always say to do whatever you can to reconcile, and then forgive



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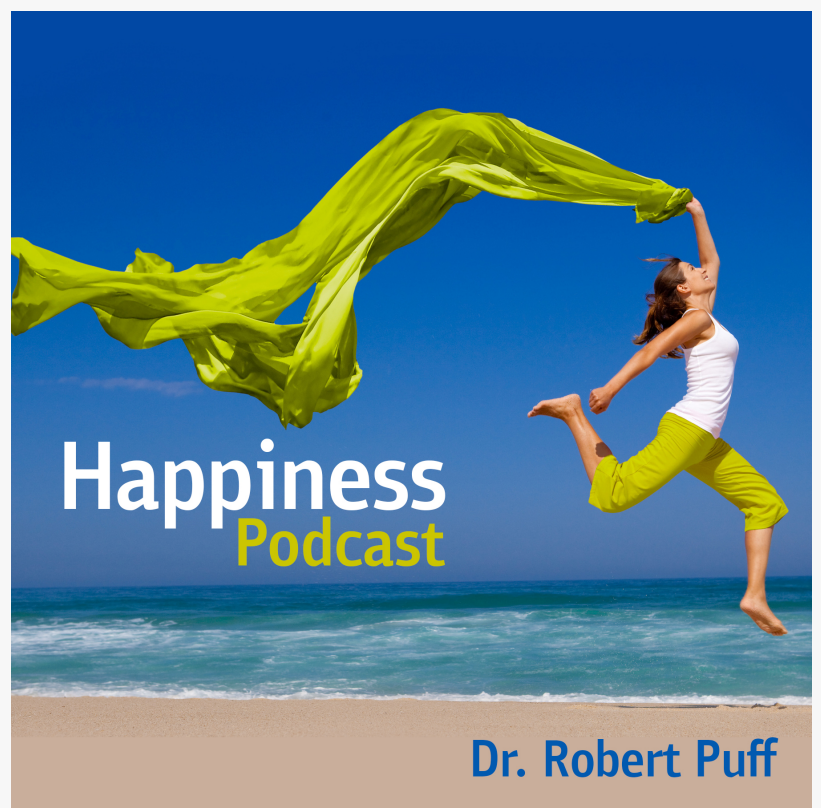
yourself, and i think that's all I can do now. Do you have any suggestions on how I can move forward?" - Jayden.

So, what do we do if we really hurt someone? How do we forgive ourselves when we have caused physical and emotional pain to our loved ones, or even worse, killed somebody while drinking and driving? It seems like there is no room for self-forgiveness when we inflict this level of pain upon others. The truth is, there is always room for self-forgiveness, no matter the hurt we've caused. Humans mess up, and sometimes we get lucky that our actions didn't cause the level of harm that they could have. Of course, there are degrees to the level of hurt we can cause others, but we should always be able to forgive ourselves. Self-forgiveness is the way forward towards a healthy and happier life.

Because if we don't allow ourselves to heal, we'll be forced to numb ourselves from the pain. Or we'll find moments of joy, but they will always be overshadowed by that moment we messed up. Both scenarios are dangerous because they have the capacity to send us down a shame spiral. This shame will take away any chance of peace or [happiness](#).

So how do we achieve self-forgiveness?

The first thing we must do is acknowledge what we've done, and be completely truthful about it. Once we're able to acknowledge the thing we've done or the hurt we've caused, it's important to gather information. For some people, this might mean going to



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therapy to process everything, while for others it might mean journaling or even speaking to the people we've hurt. Whatever it is, honesty is the first action that should take place. During this first step, we want to learn and understand what we did and how our actions affected others.

The next step towards self-forgiveness is to rectify and amend your relationship with the person or people you hurt. In the examples we looked at earlier, Jayden apologized to his sister and the woman apologized to the parents during the court proceedings.

There are many nuances during this step. For example, sometimes the person we hurt may not be here anymore. This doesn't necessarily mean we can't make amends. We can visit their grave, or simply talk to them as if they were still here and apologize for what we've done. Or we may feel a strong need to apologize, but that apology could be very triggering or painful for the inflicted party. An alternative to apologizing directly could be to tell someone who is empathetic and kind about what you did. Secrets weigh us down, and getting this off your chest to someone who will be receptive may help you move towards healing.

The next step towards self-forgiveness is to ask ourselves, is there anything else I can do to make retribution for what I've done? This may mean jail time, keeping a distance from the other person, making financial retributions, or helping other people in the same situation as the person we hurt.

And last, we take a deep breath because we've arrived at the final and hardest step: to let it go and forgive ourselves. We've contemplated our action, we've listened, we've reached out, and after we've done everything we can to make it right, we must live our own life, as best as we can. Because the truth is, we all make mistakes, and sometimes these mistakes are really big, while other times we just got really lucky that something terrible didn't happen from our decisions.

When we intentionally hurt people, it's because we are also hurting deep down. Have you ever heard the saying "Hurt people, hurt people"? Extensive research has been done about people who have committed crimes in all different types of situations, and most of the time they were simply passing off the baton they were given. This pattern of behavior doesn't make it right, but it does help us understand why people cause pain. If we take the time to understand our behavior, we can let it go.

We can choose to let our past actions go and live a better life from anywhere, even in prison. One of my friends is a Psychologist who works specifically with people who are in prison. One of the most enlightened and peaceful people she's ever worked with is a man who's currently on death row. Even in prison, he has done extensive work on himself and has found deep peace and happiness. We have to remember that we can choose to live well, one day at a time, no matter what we've done in our past.

This topic feels extra personal for me because I've been on a lifelong journey of self-forgiveness. When I was 14 years old, I decided to leave my family and friends with only a windbreaker, a

bible, and \$70 in cash. I was asking myself big questions, like what is life all about? And at the time, I felt like the only way to figure it out was to leave home for 9 months, without telling anyone. My family didn't know if I was dead or alive during this time, and as a parent, I now understand the depth of the pain I caused. I did eventually return, and after my family's relief subsided, I had a lot to forgive myself for. Once I went through the steps laid out - understanding the hurt I caused, making amends, and offering retribution - I did forgive myself and allow myself to heal. I believe that in the end, I was able to turn that experience and all of the learnings into something beautiful.

An inevitable part of life is making mistakes, and sometimes these mistakes may hurt others. The only way forward is to turn that experience into a lesson and move forward towards living a better, more fulfilled life. I believe that my path towards becoming a Psychologist goes all the way back to being 14 years old, and seeking truths to life's biggest questions. I'm grateful because I was able to forgive myself for the pain that journey caused, and as a result, I'm now able to share my learnings with you. We all deserve to live beautiful lives, no matter what. Part of that journey is self-forgiveness, and this process can begin whether the people we hurt choose to forgive us or not. You're solely responsible for forgiving yourself and living each day well.

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About the Happiness Podcast:

Do you ever wonder what it takes to lead a peaceful, happy life? Are you curious about the specific steps involved in a self-actualized, limitless life? Are you struggling with anxiety or depression? Or are you just plain tired and want some help? We explore all these concerns and more every week on the Happiness Podcast, which has been downloaded over 9 million times since its inception. Happiness does not happen by chance, but because we take specific actions in our lives to create it.

Dr. Robert Puff, Ph.D., author of 13 books, TV show host, Psychology Today blogger, and corporate trainer, has been studying the actions it takes to reach the highest levels of human achievement for decades, and he wants to share what he knows with you. Come and explore, along with millions of others from the Happiness Podcast, Dr. Puff books and Psychology Today blog, private clients and corporate workshop attendees, the specific steps to take so that you can soar in your life, find [peace of mind](#) and [be happy](#).

To learn more, go to: <https://www.HappinessPodcast.org>

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